XIII

The Yemeni Poet Al-Zubayrī and his Polemic against the Zaydī Imāms

Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Zubayrī is the hero of Yemen Arab Republic ideology, a man of unsullied reputation, a patriot and lover of his country, a figure of high tragedy, a political failure whose career at its apogee was abruptly terminated by his murder, a 'martyr', a poet of outstanding quality, one who inspired personal affection even in his political opponents.

One of the first leaders of the Yemeni Liberals (al-Aḥrār), Zubayrī was also a political pamphleteer, and if the Liberals were not very effective in the sphere of practical politics, their writings played their part in formulating the outlook of the generation discontent with Imāmic rule. Ṣawt al-'Arab and other organs of the massive Nasserite propaganda machine utilised the Liberal leaders or discarded them in accordance with current Nasserite policy.

Zubayrī's *The Imāmate and its menace to Yemen unity*, written about twenty years ago, has an historic interest as formulating and embodying views current in Yemeni Liberal circles in Cairo, Beirut and elsewhere. That the pamphlet is controversial, often even factually incorrect, does not detract from its importance as an expression of the attitudes of the Aḥrār in the hot-house political climate of the Nasserite era.

When staying in Beirut in the summer of 1969 I had the opportunity of discussing Zubayrī's pamphlet both with his life-long friend and closest associate, the veteran politician Aḥmad Nu'mān, and my friend H. E. Sayyid Aḥmad al-Shāmī then still Foreign Minister to the Imām al-Badr but at one time associated with the Aḥrār when they first set up in Aden. I am further indebted to H. E. Ḥusayn al-'Amrī, son of Imām Yaḥyā's *wazīr*, Qāḍī 'Abdullāh, murdered with him in 1948, for comment of clarification on individual points, but he is in no sense responsible for views expressed here.

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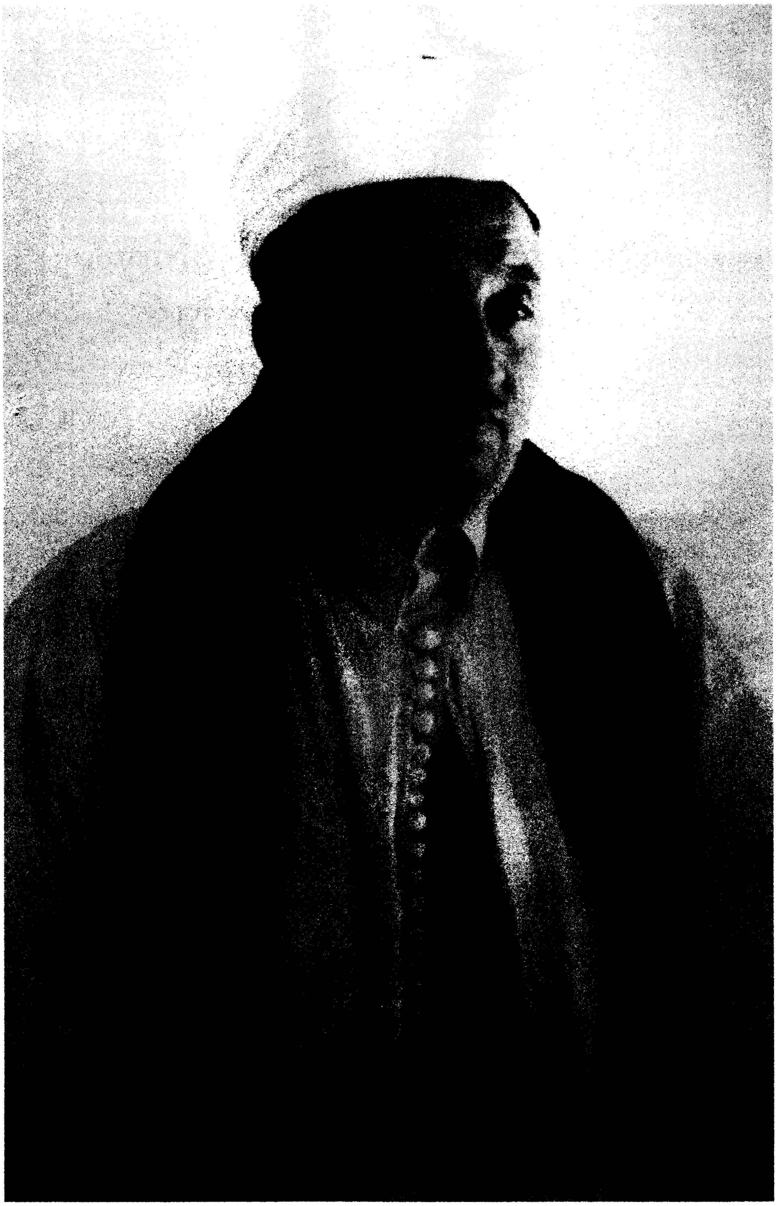
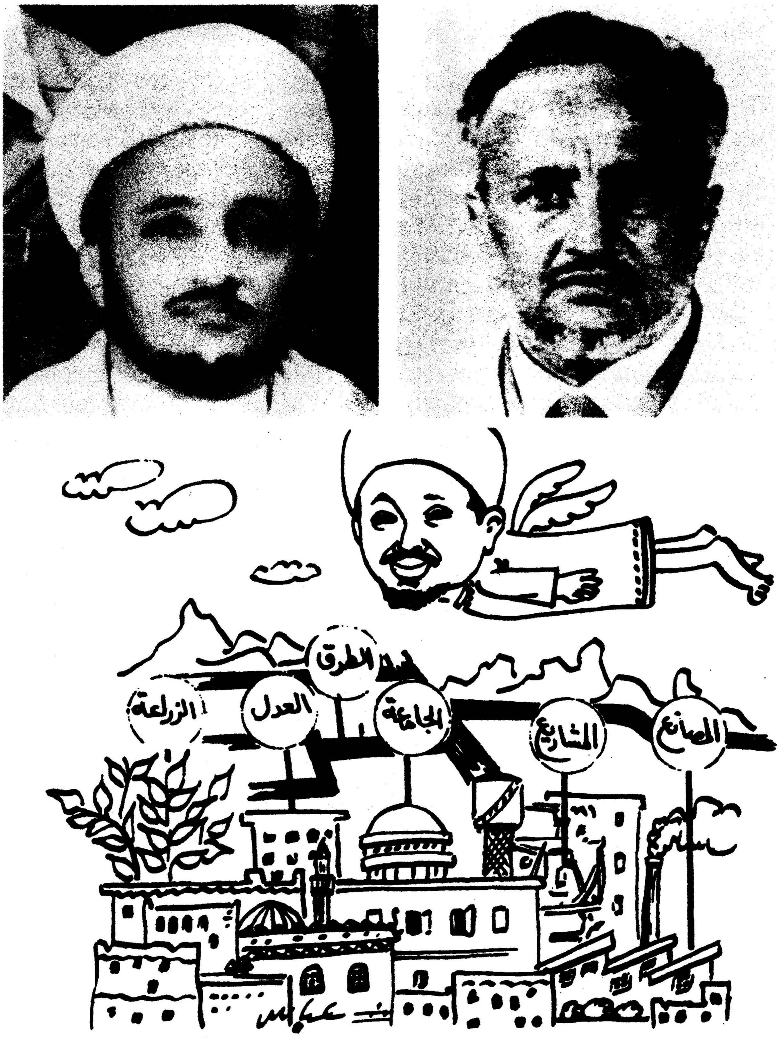


Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Zubayrī: perhaps the happiest of all the photographs of him. It was taken in the Yemen and shows him in serene and reflective mood.


الطرق
الزراعة
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.. ليت الزبيري كان معنا الآن ليرى ما تحقق ..

Top left, Zubayrī photographed in Aden in 1946 when he was a leader of the Yemenite Liberals with his friend 'al-Ustādh' Aḥmad Nu'mān. Top right, Zubayrī in Cairo during the eventful days of September 1962. Above, 'If only al-Zubayrī were with us now to see what has been accomplished!' Reading from left to right we see 'Agriculture, justice, roads, University, projects, factories' (cartoon from special number of *Al-Thawrah* commemorating al-Zubayrī, 14 Rabī' II, 1397/3.iv.1977).

Politico-Economic background

After World War I, Imām Yaḥyā al-Mutawakkil ‘ala ’llāh of the Ḥamīd al-Dīn virtually re-conquered a large part of what now constitutes the Yemen Arab Republic. He clashed with the British on certain areas of the Aden Protectorate over which Britain re-asserted its influence, under already existing treaties, with the willing co-operation of the tribes who preferred *de facto* independence to the paying of taxes to a centralised government in Ṣan‘ā’. Most of the Protectorate tribal districts were held for only brief periods by the Zaydī Imāms. The sultans or chiefs had expelled Zaydī garrisons long before the arrival of the British. Yet the Ḥamīd al-Dīn never admitted the British suzerainty over the Protectorates. Had the British, on the other hand, cared to press a forward policy after World War I they might have brought much of the Shāfi‘ī south of the Yemen into Protectorate status—but this was emphatically not a British interest. Up to the young officer coup in Ṣan‘ā’ of 1962, a *modus vivendi* prevailed to the advantage of both sides of the border.

Imām Yaḥyā had headed the movement to liberate the Yemen from the Ottoman Turks. He was greatly respected in the Yemen, and Yemenis, especially the Shāfi‘īs, rightly in my view, blamed the corruption of his officials for the various injustices they suffered. Yaḥyā hoarded silver bullion, perhaps as a reserve war-chest against emergencies, and he was excessively parsimonious in Government expenditure. While the Imāmate preserved security and ruled and observed the law—for which it is still praised today—there was criticism of Government shortcomings in the essentially moderate manifesto issued by the Yemeni Liberals in Yaḥyā’s latter years.

Yaḥyā attempted to keep the Yemen in isolation. He tried to prevent the Arabic press from entering the country, and he disapproved of even such moderate Egyptian reformers as Muḥammad ‘Abduh whom he considered ‘contemporary’ (*‘aṣrī)* which for him meant ‘bad’! However, with such numbers of Shāfi‘ī Yemenis going from the southern districts to Aden for employment, but returning periodically to their villages, this was clearly an impossibility, for they contrasted conditions there, especially later, in the heyday of Aden’s prosperity, with the backward state of their own country. On the intellectual level the disgruntled among the leading administrative families and those educated on traditional Islamic lines, especially those who went on to the Azhar at Cairo, grew increasingly critical of Yaḥyā’s rule while meeting no response from him. In 1944 al-Zubayrī, a Zaydī of the Qāḍī class, and Aḥmad Nu‘mān of a leading Shāfi‘ī family of am-Turbah fled to Aden where they opened a campaign for political reform in the Yemen.

In 1948 Imām Yaḥyā was murdered by a notorious tribal malcontent just south of Ṣan'ā', instigated by a group of conspirators in Ṣan'ā', and the well-known Sayyid 'Abdullāh al-Wazīr was proclaimed Imām there. Crown Prince Aḥmad however managed to raise the Zaydī tribes and crush the rebellion within a matter of weeks, but the tribal sack of Ṣan'ā' left bitter memories. The rebellion was purely a bid for power in which the Liberals in Aden had little or no part and in fact the murder of the Imām made them extremely unpopular with Yemenis in Aden. Aḥmad became Imām assuming the title of al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh. He ruled on traditional lines until his death from natural causes in 1962, though he had to put down two serious attempts on his life.

Yaḥyā and Aḥmad were outstanding personalities firmly handling a naturally turbulent country. The immense volume of propaganda against them has not only obscured their virtues while magnifying their faults, but takes no account of the problems which confronted them; little attempt has been made to assess their successes and failures objectively.

The external policy of the Ḥamīd al-Dīn is relatively well understood, but the internal political situation is very little known.

The Imāms were backed by the Zaydī tribes of the north but had at first no standing army. When a tribe got out of hand it could be brought to heel only by setting other tribes against it. Imām Yaḥyā, with mainly Turkish officers, developed a standing army, but the fateful military mission he despatched to Iraq before World War II produced young officers imbued with subversive sentiments and an Iraqi officer was brought to Ṣan'ā'—described to me as 'the dynamo' of the 1948 Wazīr revolt. A second (educational) mission sent by Yaḥyā to Lebanon, but diverted after his murder to Cairo by Imām Aḥmad, contained 'Abdullāh Juzaylān[1] and others who were to become 'the Officers of the Revolution' (i.e. the military coup of 1962) or officials of the Republic. The army might form a counter-balance to the armed Zaydī tribes but was ineffectual in defence against the Sa'ūdīs in 1934 and for action against the British Protectorates. The leading Sayyid houses, men of both sword and pen, regarded the mere *'askarī* with some contempt—Imām Aḥmad himself used to speak slightingly of Bimbāshī (Major) Jamāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Nāṣir (Nasser),[2] not to be rated on same level as the Shaykh of the Azhar! Whether by design or through circumstance, the army was maintained at a fairly low level. None of this was to the taste of the young officers trained abroad. Aḥmad's severe measures against recalcitrant tribes engendered grievances against the Ḥamīd al-Dīn in certain tribal leaders. An impression of the times and Aḥmad's tough personality can be formed from the verses exchanged with the notable Khawlānī chief Nājī b. 'Alī al-Ghādir at the time of the unrest in Khawlān when Nājī was parleying with the most outstanding of the Protectorate chiefs, Sharīf Ḥusayn of Bayḥān—this Aḥmad suspected of being aimed against himself. Alluding to the executions of political rebels, Nājī says:[3]

Say I—'Izrā'īl stops in your days, to forego
Dealing out life and death; for him you have outdone.
Extravagently I speak, you say. Tis not so!
By other swords than yours has there died then anyone?

To which Aḥmad makes riposte:

He who's off to Bayḥān no honour has, to trust.
How were [the Sharīf's] terms when *qāt* you chewed, apart?
Bāhūt, the Terrible, confronts you, judging, just!
From the rebellious he plucks out lungs and heart!

Some prominent Sayyid houses, notably those that had provided Imāms in earlier times, would enter into intrigues with tribes and chiefs against the Ḥamīd al-Dīn, so the dynasty has to be on its guard against the possibility of troubles from this quarter also.

The north, especially the Mashriq, required an outlet for the surplus population of a hard country. So to provide a livelihood for their northern Zaydī tribes whose support was essential to them, the Imāms would despatch tribal contingents to the Shāfi'ī districts where they acted as a sort of gendarmerie in support of the Imām's administrative officials. Officials were drawn from the Sayyid and Qāḍī classes. It is alleged that the Qāḍīs felt a sense of grievance against the Sayyids[4]—about this I am dubious, and it may be that political theorists have imposed this facile concept of class rivalry, without adequate justification, on the relationship between the two groups.

Broadly speaking, the tribal Zaydī north was governed by indirect rule with subsidies provided for the chiefs. The Shāfi'ī south was less fortunate in being under direct rule by government officials working in concert with local headmen.

Economically the Yemen was largely self-sufficient in the twenties and possibly the early thirties. The expanding population of the Shāfi'ī districts found good employment in Aden—with a notable rise in wages commencing from the building of the B.P. refinery onwards. In pursuit of higher wages a great exodus of labour to Aden and other countries followed. Propagandists blamed this movement on the Imāms, but a parallel movement had taken place earlier, from Ḥaḍramawt to Sa'ūdī Arabia, to take advantage of the economic opportunity afforded by the exploitation of oil wealth, despite the vigorous aid given to agricultural development by the benevolent British protecting power. During the last two or three years, emigration to Sa'ūdī Arabia from the Yemen Arab Republic is on a scale that menaces agriculture everywhere.[5]

The Imāms drew their revenues mostly from the tithes (*'ushūr*) on crops and the customs duties (*mukūs*), the latter regarded by strictly orthodox *'ulamā'* as breaking Islamic law—so it was essential to collect the full revenue from agriculture. By contrast today only a small part of the revenue of the Republic consists of the tithes on crops, and so the Government can afford to let the *zakāt*, as it is called, be used in part for purely local projects. Under the Imāms many Yemenis lived at subsistence level but the country was independant—today it is economically dependant on other Arab states, mainly Sa'ūdī Arabia, and therefore politically dependant also, with a fantastically high proportion of its menfolk working outside the country—but living standards in general have vastly improved.

It must be obvious that the Yemen lacked the capital to embark on major development projects like the Ṣan'ā'-Hodeidah road, quite apart from possessing none of the technical skills required. Nevertheless from my own experience I can say that the Imāms did pay some attention to building roads and to agricultural development, even if the latter was only for their personal advantage. Of course their modest efforts cannot compare with the major projects of today mainly financed by gifts of foreign capital.

Zubayrī however belongs to the era of the Imāms and is concerned with attacking the existing political situation while economics mean little to him. Today already he appears as belonging to a far by-gone-age.

Biography

Of Zubayrī's career, on which I intend to publish an account, a few relevant details are necessary. Appointed a government official about 1937, in the district (*qaḍā'*) of al-Qa'āmirah with its capital Māwiyah about 50 km. east of Ta'izz, near the Aden Protectorate frontier, he was so disquieted by the unjust practices of officials that he left and went to Egypt in 1357/1938-9, accompanying Sayyid 'Abdullāh b. 'Alī al-Wazīr with whom his father had been a close friend. 'Abdullāh al-Wazīr had looked after Zubayrī when his father died. In Cairo he attached himself to Dār al-'Ulūm as an auditor (*tilmīdh mustami'*) and in the same role he also attended lectures at Fu'ād I University, because of course he possessed no university entrance qualifications. He is said to have returned to the Yemen in 1360/1941 during World War II, and, according to one writer, only to find conditions there worse!

In 1944, as has been seen, he, Aḥmad Nu'mān and Sayyid Zayd b. 'Alī al-Mawshakī (the *nisbah* is to Mawshak, a village outside Dhamār) fled to Aden where they set up a branch of the Liberal Party and ran a newspaper. Zubayrī was on a mission to Sa'ūdī Arabia when the 'Abdullāh al-Wazīr revolt of 1948 was quelled and so escaped imprisonment in Ḥajjah. He spent some years in Pakistan, but went to Egypt after Faruq's deposition and embarked on his long political campaign against the régime in the Yemen. He published polemics in verse, notably *Thawrat al-shi'r* (The Revolution of Poetry, Cairo, 1382/1962) just before the officer coup in Ṣan'ā', and also in prose. An enthusiast at first for the 'Revolution', he soon became disillusioned[6] and, trying to form a break-away party, he was murdered at Rajūzah/Arjūzah of Jabal Baraṭ in 1965. A verse composed in his despair shortly before his death is frequently quoted:

Baḥathtu 'an hibat-in aḥbū-ka yā waṭanī
Fa-lam ajid laka illā qalbiya 'l-dāmī.
Country mine, a gift to give you I sought
Save my heart, bleeding for you, I found nought.

In the spring of 1977 I attended the festival (*mihrajān*) of Zubayrī at Ṣan'ā' University—perhaps it was a sort of triumph.[7]

Anti-Sayyid propaganda: the 'Adnān versus Qaḥṭān motive: Aḥmad al-Shāmī's counter-blasts

Sayyid Aḥmad al-Shāmī who was appointed Yemeni Mutawakkilite Ambassador in London by Imām Aḥmad in 1961, and, after the officer coup in Ṣan'ā' on September 26th, 1962, became Royalist Foreign Minister, a poet and writer, pokes sly fun at the Yemeni Liberal (al-Aḥrār) intellectuals who made the onslaught on the Hāshimites and developed the theme of antagonism in the Yemen between 'Adnān and Qaḥṭān.[8] 'Adnān is the eponymous ancestor of the northern Arabs and *ergo* of the Yemeni Hāshimites/'Alawīs /Sayyids, while Qaḥṭān is the eponym of the southern Arabs. 'In this present age of ours,' he says,[9] 'some men of letters, such as the author Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mu'allimī[10] and Mr Muḥammad Aḥmad Nu'mān and their followers have attempted to stir up the subject of Qaḥṭānism and 'Adnānism and revive ethnic and sectarian chauvinism, but their propaganda would have won no acceptance but for the "Army action", then the interference with fire and sword on the part of the "Egyptians", on the 26th September, 1962.' Both al-Mu'allimī and Zubayrī, al-Shāmī told me with a naughty chuckle, are 'Adnānī by descent, the Zubayrī family claiming descent from al-Zubayr b. al-'Awwām, a Companion of the Prophet! He also alludes to the scurrilous anti-Hāshimite propaganda of 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Bayḍānī on the radio, later reproduced in book form![11] Al-Bayḍānī's allegations against Imām Aḥmad which, or so I am told, used to arouse him to fury, are without substantiation—plainly lying invention. Moreover he had been expelled from the Liberals led by al-Zubayrī and the 'Ustādh' 'Aḥmad Nu'mān in Cairo. Though he takes up the anti-Hāshimite ideas of the Liberals about this time, he does not represent them in any way. Indeed 'Abdullāh Juzaylān who directed the officer attack on al-Badr's mansion, Dār al-Bashā'ir, says[12] that 'Dr' 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Bayḍānī broadcasting from Ṣawt al-'Arab, 'attacked the Hāshimites violently without any justification, not realising that nearly 80 per cent of the officers of the revolution were Hāshimites (as also were a large number in the prisons) as a punishment for their open disobedience and revolt against the Ḥamīd al-Dīn family ruling in Ṣan'ā'.' Juzaylān got in touch with Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wāḥid of the Egyptian Embassy informing him of the highly unfavourable reactions produced by 'Dr' Bayḍānī's 'ignorance of Yemeni society', and Cairo put a stop to his talks.

Zubayrī, though he had a background of the traditional Zaydī learning before going to Cairo, was clearly a poet and in no sense an objective scholarly historian. Insofar as can be judged he was unacquainted with western scholarship, and it is likely that he did not even read very widely. At the time he wrote his attack on the Imāmate he was spokesman of the Yemeni Union (al-Ittiḥād al-Yamanī) in Cairo. Though a good speaker, honest and sincere, regarded with affection and respect, his argument in the pamphlet translated here could, without difficulty, be demolished by the highly intelligent aristocratic *'ulamā'* of the Zaydi Sayyids or Qāḍīs. Since the nominal unity between Egypt and the Yemen, into which Imām Aḥmad had adroitly inveigled Nasser, their agreement had resulted in Nasser's muzzling the Yemeni Liberals in Cairo—so the pamphlet had to be published in Beirut—naturally the Liberals were turned on again when Imām Aḥmad's celebrated anti-'nationalisation' poem brought about the break with Nasser.

Nu'mān *père* ('al-Ustādh' Aḥmad Nu'mān) said that, from the point of view of the Yemeni Liberals, the great advantage of Zubayrī's pamphlet attacking the Imāmate was that it should have been written by a Zaydī and not by a Shāfi'ī like himself. Zubayrī in turn was to influence a much younger man, Muḥsin al-'Aynī (later to become a Premier in Republican Yemen), especially by the views expounded in his *al-Khud'at al-kubrā*[13] where Zubayrī advances the proposition that the populace (*sha'b*) must have sovereignty in the Yemen as the cure for the country's ills. 'In saying this I do not invite the elimination of the Mutawakkilī ruler but I do invite elimination of his divine will which persists in enslaving the populace, negating its humanity and denying its rights, as also it refuses that it should have a government representing it and expressing its will [*irādah*].' These remarks have about them the ring of our own 17th-century attack on the theory of divine right and are with other expressions in fact not part of the native Yemeni vocabulary but are derived from the West.

Muḥsin al-'Aynī, drawn from a different social class from that of Zubayrī, a product of the Orphan School at Ṣan'ā' and a Ba'thist, writing about 1957 speaks in more moderate tones.[14] We want a ruler, he says, who derives his power from us—We the Tribes. (Muḥsin is of tribal descent, it is said of Banī Bahlūl.) We want a ruler stripped of his holiness—we want a ruler called Mus'id, Ṣāliḥ, Sa'īd, 'Alī, Muḥammad, just like you, me and other people. We have tried these (Imāmic titles) al-Mutawakkil 'ala 'llāh, al-Hādī ila 'l-Ḥaqq for 1,096 years, and the result is plain to see. I direct these words to the Sayyids first of all, and say that we are not against the Sayyids as a group among the people, but we do not want the ruler to be a ruler because he is a Sayyid. There is no reason why a Sayyid should not govern the Yemen, but because he is a man, because he is competent, because he is one of the people. Muḥsin points out, that in Cairo, Sayyids do not differentiate between themselves and others. Some Sayyids with whom he has discussed the Yemen have a liberal outlook and attribute the state of affairs there to a ruler who justifies his evil actions behind the names of God! He avers that he is not attacking the Sayyids as such, nor are all the Sayyids to blame for the current situation and the privileges they enjoy. 'On the contrary you tribes and men of the Yemen are those who diligently sought out the Sayyid, looking everywhere for him, according him the place of honour at your meetings, urging him to idleness and seeking good fortune (*barakāt*) through him'. You made the Sayyids a special class, he says, neither cultivating nor labouring, but ruling, judging and living by your efforts. (In point of fact this is not quite true for, in Shahārah, I photographed Sayyids with little picks going to work in their fields) There should be no Zaydism and Shāfi'ism, no Hāshimism and Qaḥṭānism, no tribes- and towns-men, no turbans and caps, no Tihāmah and Mountain folk, no tribes and peasants (*ra'āyā*), but only Yemenis!

There is much more in similar vein, some coming near to repeating Zubayrī's tract verbatim.

Muḥammad Nu'mān (*fils*) is credited with the development of the 'Adnān-Qaḥṭān rivalry as a pressing political question. It was later to be taken up by 'Abdullāh al-Sallāl. Sayyid Aḥmad al-Shāmī asks with mischievous innocence why the Hāshimite House should be considered foreigners in the Yemen when they have been there for 1,100 years, for the Iryānīs for example would not be called foreigners because they came from Iraq 300 years ago! In the preface to his poem *Dāmighat al-Dawāmigh*[15] Aḥmad al-Shāmī makes a well documented refutation of the attack on the 'Alawīs citing the relevant historical sources and concluding with verses from Zubayrī himself whose inconsistent attitude he underlines.

Wa-Banū Hāshim-in 'urūq-un karīmat-un lanā min judhūr-in
Ya'rubiyyah.
Banū Hāshim are noble stocks belonging to us, from our
Ya'rubī roots.

In another counter-attack *The myth of Arabia Felix*[16] which he dedicates 'to those who have distorted/defamed the history of the Imāmate in the Yemen', al-Shāmī points out that, in the major physical or political disasters that have afflicted the Yemen, no Imāms were involved, and he alludes to those who recently have been writing on Hāshimīs and Qaḥṭānīs, and *al-Aṭrāf al-ma'niyyah,* Muḥammad Nu'mān's well-known booklet.[17]

In fact Yemeni literature seems devoid of the anti-Hāshimite motive after the days of Hamdānī and the 6th/12th century Nashwān b. Sa'īd,[18] until pamphlets (*manshūrāt*) on this topic began to appear in the early 1940s. It is said that the sons of Imām Yaḥyā, of whom there were fourteen, were opposed to the Qāḍī class, presumably because of rivalry arising from the appointment of the princes to high government office, and it is implied that this may have given rise, in part at least, to anti-Hāshimite propaganda. Imām Aḥmad however, in his day, made no distinction in this respect between Sayyids and Qāḍīs.

The Nasser regime in Egypt, in its hostility to the Hāshimites and monarchies, against which it campaigned so assiduously, was more than sympathetic to the anti-Imāmic line developed by the Liberals. The context of Zubayrī's polemic is, nevertheless, wholly Yemeni and he did not want the Yemen to rely on any external power—including Egypt—this was the major point of difference with the Egyptian agent al-Bayḍānī.

Many Americans seem to have been susceptible to propaganda prejudicial to the Sayyids. A Foreign Service officer[19] displays this bias markedly in speaking of a dole issued to some Sayyids by the Imām on which they lived, averring of Sayyids in general that 'seldom were they known to engage in gainful activity other than as officials of the Imāmate'. Quite on the contrary, numbers of Sayyids in Ṣan'ā' are engaged in business and even in the manual crafts. In exploring this alleged 'dole' with informed Yemenis the following statements emerged. In Yaḥyā's time a *Daftar al-Ṣadaqah*, also called *Dār al-I'āshāt*, was set up in Ṣan'ā' near al-'Urḍī, the Barracks, which provided needy persons with two baps (*kidmah*) of bread a day, and two *riyāls* per month. It was maintained by the Bayt al-Māl, the Treasury. Many persons had monthly stipends (*murattabāt*), Sayyids, Qāḍīs, and others even if not officials—in some cases at least these seem to have been supporters of Imām Yaḥyā before the departure of the Turks. These came from the Bayt al-Māl or al-Khizānat al-'Āmmah. From the time of Yaḥyā the revenues, whether *zakāt*, aid (*musā'adāt*), *jizyah* (poll-tax on non-Muslims) or other taxes had become mixed together in the Bayt al-Māl, but no distinction was made in stipends (*ma'āshāt*) and gifts from it made by the Imām, between a Sayyid or a member of any other class. M. Wenner's[20] assertion that a worth while result of the 1962 coup was that 'it eliminated most of the influence and power of the Sayyid class, probably the largest stumbling block to reform in the past' is an unwarranted aspersion on a class that produced numbers of able men, whether as administrators, scholars or others. These dicta reveal a fundamental lack of understanding of Yemeni society.

Aḥmad al-Shāmī had commenced on a counterblast to Zubayrī's tract but had abandoned work on it and, in Beirut in 1969, permitted me to copy from his draft.

He points out that the Imāmate is not 'a sectarian factional concept' (cf. para. 4 a *infra*) of the Zaydīs but every Muslim saw it was essential to choose the Imām so as to have a source of reference (*marja'*) and reliance (*amīn*)—on this Shāfi'īs, Zaydīs and all other schools concur, even if they differ as to persons and methods of selection. He avers that Shāfi'īs believe in loyalty and absolute obedience to the Imām more than the Zaydīs. He is unaware of any 'tenets, religious rites, and sectarian laws' (para. 4b) the Imāmate imposes on the Shāfi'īs. He does not deny there have been individual Imāms who have ruled unjustly and acted wrongfully or tyranically like (secular) monarchs, but this is no more the fault of the Imāmate as an institution than a criminal's actions are the fault of the *sharī'ah*.

He justly refutes Zubayrī's absurd assertion (para. 4d) that the Imāmate divided the Yemeni populace into two sections, and points out how it united the country (*waḥḥad kalimat al-sha'b*) against the Mamlūks and Ottomans. He agrees that the Lower Yemen has suffered great injustice and been subjected to armed force (para. 4d) but this is not the fault of the institution of the Imāmate, and the (Zaydī) northern districts in Rasūlid times suffered from their raids.

Zubayrī deceives himself (paras 7e and 7f) and the truth in considering that 'opening the gate of independent judgement' was a trick to introduce the Fifth School. He counsels Zubayrī to consider matters from a scholarly level, to stick to facts, and not to deceive himself. 'Individuals do not endure for ever, nor do families, but the principle endures and circulates with generations (*ajyāl*).'[21]

Translation of al-Zubayrī's attack on the Imāmate

The Yemeni Union
The Committee for Education and Publication[22]

The Imāmate and its menace to Yemeni Unity

Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Zubayrī[23]

[3]

1. *In the cause of popular sovereignty and national unity*

(*a*) Today the Yemen is passing through a critical phase of its political history, for political tendencies are contending there with each-other, swaying its future hither and thither in violent fashion.

(*b*) The strongest of the political tendencies in respect of reaction and aggression against the populace[24] is the tendency of that front working to buttress up the Imāmate, adopting the Sayf al-Ḥasan[25] as its leader, spokesman and candidate for the Imāmate in the future.

(*c*) The Yemeni Liberals who have raised the slogan of national unity and popular sovereignty, herein declare their frank opinion on the issue of the Imāmate, so that the Arab populace in the Yemen may become aware of the reality of the unexpected perils lurking in wait for its future behind an administration headed by that doyen of reaction in the Yemen, Sayf al-Islām al-Ḥasan.

(*d*) For this very reason the Committee for Education and Publication of the Yemeni Union presents this comprehensive study on the disastrous[26] Imāmate through which the Yemen has suffered for about a thousand years. The issuing of this treatise is by way of participation only in this battle and to illumine the path, the path of the fighters throughout the whole of the Yemen.

Victory must come.
The country is above all.
Rule belongs to the populace only.

The Committee for Education and Publication

[4]

2. *Popular sovereignty*

(*a*) We wish to liberate our life from every one of the sorts of bondage. political servitude as represented in Colonialism coming to us from without, Despotic rule from within which grips us by the throat, and spiritual bondage as it manifests itself in the false and oppressive prejudices, under the burden of which the spirit of the populace collapses, under which the humanity of the masses is trampled into powder, and because of which the wheel of history and laws of evolution stall, and which, leaving that aside, contain (factors) That threaten to tear the populace apart and shatter its unity, and social bondage concealed within certain of the reactionary traditional usages and discriminatory barriers which[27] differentiate between the classes and groups of the populace in a way that is based on no foundation either of logic or justice.

(*b*) We have already defined how we stand in the sphere of political and social emancipation in publishing our many lectures and declarations opposed to Colonialism, then, *The demands of the populace,*[28] and *The objectives of the Liberals*, and, as time goes on, we shall define our position in other spheres and through various media.

[5]

3. *National unity*

(*a*) The Yemen is a small part of the great Arab home-land, but Colonialism has insisted on partitioning it into two main segments ... the occupied segment, i.e. what is called Aden and the Eastern and Western Protectorates,[29] and the independent segment, i.e. what is called the Mutawakkilite Kingdom.

(*b*) Colonialism has moreover insisted upon dividing what may not be divided,[30] i.e. the segment held under duress, for it has made out of it an unending chain of emirates, sultanates, and shaykhdoms,[31] as too, Despotism, in the ages of darkness and ignorance, has insisted on preposterous fission between the inhabitants of the independent segment, cherishing, through its iniquitous measures, the sectarian and regional division, and discriminating in its dealings between what it calls a Shāfi'ī segment and what it calls a Zaydī segment. It further discriminates between the regional and tribal segments, and between the towns and villages, and it advances him whose spirit glories in descent and family.[32]

(*c*) This, Colonialism and Despotism have done in concert, in order that facility may be accorded the diabolical principle of 'Divide and rule' to tear apart the unity of the populace, and prevent it from uniting *en bloc* against existing circumstances, but the unjust reactionary pacts[33] have failed to a great extent, faced by the awareness, firmness, and temperament of the populace. This is because profound patriotic sentiment and the innate sense of unity[34] are of such stubbornly unbending force that they cannot be smashed into fragments by mere personal pacts between rulers [6] and colonisers that are no more than scraps of paper.

(*d*) Moreover the discontent which is shared by and pervades all classes in the independent part, and is widespread throughout every district, every tribe, town and village, was and remains stronger than all the stratagems to rend asunder and separate. On the contrary indeed it has created a sanctified bond of suffering and has given a unity to the aims, sentiments, and struggle of the populace, more especially once the Liberals assumed the task of propaganda on behalf of popular unity, and drew the attention of the sons of the populace to the diabolical plot[35] which Tyranny and Colonialism are engineering against their national patriotic entity.

(*e*) Local Yemeni unity—we mean by this only that it should be strengthened and pervade all parts of the independent segment as between each other, and that it should be effected in the parts of the occupied segment held under duress, but with the provision that a joint struggle of the sons of the populace in both segments should rise up against Colonialism, Despotism, and partition, to prepare the way for complete political unity between the two principal parts ... although unification between them will not be completed until after liberation from Colonialism.

[7]

4. *The menace of the Imāmate to national unity*

(*a*) From its foundation the Imāmate has been basically a sectarian factional concept, embraced by a half[36] of the sons of the populace from ancient time, namely the Zaydiyyah, the inhabitants of the Upper Yemen only.

(*b*) As for the majority of the populace in the Lower Yemen, Tihāmah, and the whole of the Occupied Yemen, they do not profess adhesion to this Imāmate, nor do they consider it has any right to dominate over them. On the contrary they see in it an authority imposed upon them both politically and spiritually. This Imāmate does not stop at the limits of its political authority but imposes tenets, religious rites[37] and sectarian laws on half of the populace, incompatible with the sect to which it adheres.

(*d*) It is of the nature of this arbitrary rule that it leaves a bitter feeling in the majority of the populace, turning the division into a dark and fearful shadow which envelops the country and perpetually threatens its progress —so too, it makes the Imāmic government in the eyes of this segment like a government alien to it which expresses neither its own will nor its own creed. Even worse than this is that it considers it (the Imāmic government) as a government particular to the Upper Yemen only, as if the inhabitants of the Upper Yemen as a whole constitute a ruling stratum of society maintaining for itself a monopoly of rule, and making a mere *lebensraum* for itself of the Lower Yemen. So it is—while the inhabitants of the Upper Yemen themselves are untouched by this false invention[38] and injustice. Yet, on the contrary, they (the inhabitants of the Upper Yemen) have remained longest in endurance of the bitterness of Imāmic tyranny, and they see [8] in it a rule which has intruded[39] upon them, alien to their life, imposing on them, alongside political authority, spiritual authority which lives in their blood[40] like a terrifying nightmare, stunting their Arabism (*'Urūbah*) and their humanity,[41] isolating them in a darkness of ignorance, deprivation, and starvation,[42] making them swallow the poisonous Imāmic doctrines, then looses them on the other section of their fellow countrymen like rabid wolves.[43]

In this fashion the Imāmate has succeeded in sorting out the populace into two different sections in each of which lies an instrument for one of its objectives. If the Lower Yemeni segment has much to endure in the way of robbery and coercion by armed force, the Upper segment imbibes the spiritual poisons that compel its sons to blind obedience to the Imām without discussion or reckoning and without expectation of reward. When the sky rains one is told, 'These are the Imām's blessings.' When it is a year of dearth one is told, 'This is through an invocation by the Imām against the recalcitrant rebels.'[44] The *zakāt*[45] is given only to the Imām, and certain prayers[46] are only effective if the Imām be present. Prosperity[47] arrives and it is through the grace of the Imām; poverty, misery and death come down and the miserable murdered wretches are transferred to the Imām's pomegranates, grapes and delights in Paradise![48]

One of the terrible Imāmic famines descended on Ṣan'ā', and after eating cats and dogs most of its people died though the Government magazines were full of grain, and people went to ask the Imām Yaḥyā for relief, but he made a contemptuous face at them and delivered his famous maxim, 'He who dies is a martyr—he who lives is delivered.'[49]

The personality of the Yemenis was crushed beneath the shade[50] of the Imāmate, [9] the leadership of their country was prohibited them—even to contemplate it became a crime, at the same time religious and political. Yemeni history was distorted, so that we began to read therein nothing but the names of the saints,[51] the gods of Imāms, their adherents,[52] and partisans.[53] As for the personalities of the populace, no sooner did any hero of their raise his head to renown and honour, but the 'Pure' Imāms would make haste to despatch him accompanied by their curses, to his grave. Then they would allude to him in history only as the oppressor, the enemy of God, the profligate heretic, the denier of the interpretation,[54] as well as other epithets beside these.

In this fashion the operation of crushing the Arabism[55] of the Yemen, its popular personalities, and its struggling revolutions carried on continuously for more than a thousand years.

[10]

5. *Authority[56] derived from Heaven*

No kings and despots on earth throughout history can ascend their thrones without relying on some structure of tribal solidarity or class feeling[57] which they acquire from among their people, making them partners in their gains, and with whom they are obliged to ingratiate themselves through various kinds of favours and reform,[58] even in the darkest eras of history—except the Imāms of the Yemen, for they felt the need of nothing of this sort, but managed to convince the populace that no reward should be expected in return for their support and service, their slogan handed down by tradition being:

'Whosoever loves us, the People of the House (Ahl al-Bayt), let him make ready a cloak against tribulation.'[59]

It is sufficient for one of them to ascend the throne that he should then say to the people: God it was who appointed him ruler. God it was who commanded the people to obey, serve, and revere him, endure and die for the sake of supporting him. His authority is not derived from the populace, nor through the favour of the populace. On the contrary, it is a privilege bestowed by Heaven. He is God's shadow, God's Vicegerent and Caliph.

[11]

6. *The function of the Imām*

In accordance with this psychology[60] the Imām applies himself to the burdens of his office, but these burdens are virtually confined to confiscating the wealth of the populace in the name of the *zakāt*-tax,[61] the suppression of popular tremors in the name of the Holy War,[62] to doing battle with oppressors, and then, to the building of a mosque with the name of the Imām, to the vicinity of which generally is adjoined the dome of this Imām's tomb,[63] to prolong his spiritual influence even when he is in the grave, then to (bequeathing) a generous legacy[64] of land which he leaves to his sons and his grandsons, after stealing it from the populace by any sort of means.

As for the chief message the Imām takes upon himself (to deliver) it is the propagation of the spirit of asceticism, abandoning building a thriving life, along with finding fault in any inclination towards building and construction, apart from Imāmic castles, mosques, and domes of tombs.[65]

Here lies the magic key to the secret locked up in the history of the Yemen for over a thousand years, this era of rigid paralysis. When the human race was still in its cradle, the Yemen had a civilisation, a culture and diverse arts of living, the most important of which were the arts of architecture and engineering of the dams without which the Yemen cannot live, but these long Imāmic era have gone by without a single dam remaining in the whole of Yemen, whereas the barbarous colonising Abyssinians, who stayed no longer than seventy years in the Yemen in the remotest dark ages, [12] were inspired by the natural circumstances of the Yemen and its agricultural requirements to renew the structure of the Dam in Ma'rib after its collapse.

The other preoccupation of any Imām is to consolidate his spiritual position among the tribes under the pretext of belonging to the party of the People of the House, so that it becomes firmly established in the mentality of the populace in the Upper segment ... that the Imām is the shadow of God, his Vicegerent by right, and his standing like that of the Apostle of God,[66] God bless and honour him, whose relation with the people and whose position with regard to them is ordained by Divine legislation in this holy verse:

'It is not for a believing man or a believing woman to have a choice in their affair when God and His Apostle have decided an affair.'[67]

All that comes down concerning obedience to God and His Apostle applies also to the Imām because he is God's Vicegerent and Caliph.

These spiritual teachings are combined in the Upper segment of the Yemen with factional[68] attacks against what they call 'Deniers of Interpretation'[69] who do not hold with the Imāmic doctrine—the majority of the populace.[70] This is to justify the violent plundering[71] forays which inevitably every Imām despatches against the cultivators, the peaceful sons of the populace in the Lower Yemen and Tihāmah.

[13]

7. *The Imāmate and the propagation of learning*

The Yemen, in truth, even under the auspices[72] of the Imāms, was profuse in activity on an extensive scale in (the sphere of) learning, the door of independent judgement (*ijtihād*)[73] was open, the mosques crowded with scholars (*'ulamā'*) and pupils, and production in the field of (literary) composition used to excite astonishment and admiration.[74]

The underlying reason for this is that the Yemeni populace possesses an ancient heritage of civilisation, and inclines by its nature towards learning and knowledge, in quest of which it roves to the remotest parts of the earth. Added to this inclination is the fact that the door of independent judgement (*ijtihād*) lies open, and that the stipulations[75] for the Chosen Imām are that he should have attained the degree of independent judgement (*ijtihād*), for pre-eminence in this freedom with regard to learning is the foundation upon which the Imāmate is essentially based. The Imāms would not have had the right to the development of an entity distinct from the authority of the Islamic Caliphate had they not been able to demolish the traditional framework[76] that used to encompass the populaces of the Arab Islamic Caliphate.

The obstinate rigid notion holding that the Islamic Schools have become restricted to the Four Schools had become spread abroad, and it had become difficult to conceive of creating another school except through a revolutionary venture.

Moreover, since the jurisprudence (*fiqh*), sciences of learning, and Schools of the four Imāms[77] had emerged under the auspices of the Umayyad and 'Abbāsid Caliphs only, and by the very nature [14] of the case the title to the Caliphate of the People of the House was ignored, it was inevitable that any ambitious person of the 'Alawīs wishing to avenge himself, or retaliate, or to found an 'Alawī state on a religious basis, should demand the return of the title to the Caliphate to the People of the House. Before anything else, any ambitious person of this sort must inevitably smash the iron moulds into which the Four Imāms had poured the fundamental bases (*uṣūl*) of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), legislation (*tashrī'*), and the fundamental Islamic principles, one and all, after which they had closed the door of independent judgement (*ijtihād*).

Hence sprang the revolutionary theory of the opening of the gate of independent judgement (*ijtihād*), so that the first Fifth School, namely the Hādī-ite[78] Zaydī School, might enter through it, and so that it would be feasible for him to force a political theory, which the other Imāms (of the four Schools) do not recognise, onto the fundamental principles (*uṣūl*) of the religion, namely that the Caliphate can lie in the 'Alawīs of the sons of Fāṭimah[79] only—as also it introduces a yet more dangerous politico-religious theory, namely the duty of revolting against the unjust.[80] This was so that it would be the easier for him to revolt against the Caliphs, and found a separate state from them and a Caliphate for the 'Alawīs of the People of the House.

Thus the chief aim of the oppressed but ambitious among the 'Alawīs was to revive the right of the 'Alawīs to the Caliphate. This aim it was which was first instrumental in opening the door of independent judgement (*ijtihād*), and which formulated the theory of revolt against the unjust, and then the theory of the aim itself, namely the exclusive right of the 'Alawīs to the Caliphate.[81]

[15]

8. *Freedom of independent judgement* (ijtihād)

(*a*) This is one of the politico-religious theories which the propagandists of the Imāms promulgated.

(*b*) Certainly these are splendid theories, but the real value they have, and the true balance against which history will weight its judgement in favour of these Imāms or against them, lies in the extent alone to which these theories share in practical application to real life.

(*c*) In the matter of independent judgement (*ijtihād*) it must be borne in mind that in fundamental (*uṣūlī*) questions it is prohibited, and therefore nobody has derived any advantage in the fields of controversy around the important issues of Islam. Nor has the propaganda of the Imāms been guiltless of disseminating the spirit of partisanship among the inhabitants of the Upper segment against those of the Lower segment, and among tribal circles against the town-dwellers, and of dubbing those who belong to such Islamic sects as the Ash'arīs,[82] 'Infidels of Interpretation', and of exploiting those theories for political and economic ends.

(*d*) Even in questions of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) possibly touching, closely or remotely, judicial or administrative affairs the opinion[83] of the Imām is what is imposed on the populace in North and South, and any independent judgement (*ijtihād*) running counter to the opinion of the Imām is (accorded) no value.[84][16]

(*e*) All this apart, the effectiveness of the freedom of independent judgement (*ijtihād*) has, over the years, declined and diminished,[85] and a frightening reality has taken its place, namely that while a formal freedom, from the theoretical aspect only, does exist among the *'ulamā'*, the protagonists of Imāmic thought work in tribal circles, in a reverse direction, spreading the doctrine of sanctification and deification of the Imāmic office, and all that this basic doctrine comprises in the way of theories consequent upon it. All these serve the throne of the Imāms and fashion an ignorant popular partisan support for them out of the tribal element, eliminating any value attached to freedom of independent judgement (*ijtihād*), stifling the breath of the liberal *'ulamā'* and causing them to live throughout their lives under a sort of stranglehold, till, perchance, a moderate Imām who will try to encourage the liberal *'ulamā'* succeeds the partisan Imām. But the ruling class of factionaries[86] around him will manipulate the partisan warrior elements so as to divest the Imām of his might and power and impose the opinion it wishes.

(*f*) Yemeni history tells us that the very learned Sayyid Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Amīr, born in 1099 H. (A.D. 1687-8), a leading personality of the liberal Hāshimite *'ulamā'*, exemplifying the high-minded struggle against the partisan Imāmic attitude, endured[87] numerous afflictions in the time of al-Mutawakkil 'ala 'llāh al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥusayn, then (in that of) al-Ḥusayn b. al-Qāsim and in the days of the Imām al-Mahdī al-'Abbās b. al-Ḥusayn.[88]

(*g*) Al-Manṣūr confided to him the office of preacher in the Great Jāmi '-Mosque of Ṣan'ā'.[89] Then he attempted to drop the mention of the Imāms at the (Friday) address. So the family of the Imām conspired with an alien person called al-Sayyid Yūsuf al-'Ajamī[90]—they conspired to murder Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl at the next Friday (prayer), but al-Manṣūr put them under detention, [17] subsequently expelling al-'Ajamī from the Yemen and releasing the others, but he did not permit al-Amīr (to deliver) the address after that. They had accused al-Amīr of 'hostility[91] to the People of the House', although he was one of them. This was because they were considering him presuming to (exercise) independent judgement in that which is contrary to the general (Zaydī) doctrine[92] in such matters as raising and clasping the hands in the prayer.[93]

(*g*) The very learned al-Shawkānī[94] is of the opinion that the culpability was not that of the people at large, 'for they follow any croaker'. If they are told, 'This is truth', they take sides for it.[95] If they are told, 'This is false', they take sides against it. The culpability is the culpability only of defective jurisprudence (*fiqh*) that accuses of unbelief (*kufr*) anyone wishing to be liberated, to exercise independent judgement (*ijtihād*) and hold independent views.[96]

(*i*) It is curious that the very learned al-Shawkānī, a most scholarly person of penetrating judgement (*ra'y*) considers this partisan attitude is not religious but, on the contrary, temporal, and that it assumes the veil of religion only. This is because a common contrived and hypocritical notion is wide-spread among people that defending and partisanship for the People of the House profits one for the most part, more especially if the partisan is so arrogant as to threaten those liberal *'ulamā'* whose minds entice them into exercising independent judgement on some matter, in opposition to the People of the House.[97]

(*j*) Al-Shawkānī said, It had happened that rumours had spread abroad against the very learned Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Amīr to the effect that he was opposing the People of the House, and persons of ulterior motives disseminated these among some partisan milieux. So they rallied in revolt against the Imām because of his support of Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Amīr. The Imām attempted to convince them but they would not be satisfied until he had assigned them 20,000 *riyāls* per annum.[98]

(*k*) Al-Shawkānī said, 'So they left off rebellion against the Imām since their sole object of desire[99] was (the goods of this) [18] world'.

(*l*) Al-Shawkānī goes on to say,[100] One of the tribulations of this world is that thousands of those partisans come into Ṣan'ā' and threaten anyone who reads the books of the ***Sunnah***, but the culpability is not theirs—it is the culpability alone of those who instigate them.

(*m*) Al-Shawkānī then adduced the example of a tragic dissension[101] of this sort during which a bloody battle broke out between certain tribes and the townsfolk of Ṣan'ā' because the promoters of the dissension were instigating the tribes to pick a quarrel with the people of Ṣan'ā' and so terrorize them that none of them would dare disobey the People of the House.

(*n*) These are samples drawn from the history of the Yemen but they contain an effective pointer in support of the view I hold—namely, that freedom of independent judgement (*ijtihād*) is but superficial,[102] divided, or confined within a narrow compass, and that the objectives of the Imāmate are well preserved objectives, to encroach upon which the alleged freedom of independent judgement (*ijtihād*) will not dare.[103]

[19]

9. *The duty to revolt against the unjust*

(*a*) This is another of the resplendent principles which the propagandists of the Imāmate bore along with them. It is a principle, in embracing and believing which, the first of those who bore it to the Yemen were perhaps sincere because, in actual fact, they were in revolt against the 'Abbāsid and Umayyad Caliphates.

(*b*) But is this principle applied against any one of the Imāms?

(*c*) Would one of the sons of the populace have the temerity to revolt against one of the Imāms, then to become a 'heretic', 'oppressor', 'the enemy of God' both in the eyes of the state (*dawlah*) and the subservient[104] *'ulamā'*?

(*d*) When we have perceived that the Imāmate has broken the back of the populace and made two segments out of it, one of them the Zaydī segment and the other the Shāfi'ī segment—there are yet further well established chains of divisions and segmentations, one grasping the throat of the other, emanating, all of them, from this single chronic malady—the divine right to govern mankind.

(*e*) The Shāfi'īs, as I have shown, consider the Imāmate a single authority, and that the Zaydīs as a group are those who govern the Shāfi'īs, ruling over and exploiting them.

(*f*) When, however, we turn to the Zaydīs we do not find they hold this view [20] or put themselves in this position. On the contrary they feel a bitter vehement resentment that it is a particular stratum of Hāshimite families which enjoys the divine right to govern, that is specially favoured with it and passes it, turn about, among the ambitious male members of it, generation after generation, feeling a consciousness of superiority and distinction over the rest of the sons of the populace.

(*g*) Then, when we turn to the Hāshimites, we find poor wretches, unfortunates and deprived persons. These we find pointing their fingers in fear and trembling at a single family of the Hāshimites—the Royal Family that has ruled despotically, exploiting and singling out for itself the benefits of government and attacking the great Hāshimites[105] more than it has attacked any other group.

(*h*) From one angle so it appears, but when, from another angle, we examine the sentiments of the greatest force among the populace, i.e., the tribes, those of them who farm—and those who do not, then indeed we find them harbouring a general sense of bitterness against the inhabitants of the towns as a whole, considering the townsfolk, as they maintain, to be sharing with the Imāms in the benefits and gains of government, and responsible for its outrages and misdeeds.[106]

(*i*) Hence we perceive the distinguishing marks of this ill-omened rupture between Shāfi'īs and Zaydīs, Hāshimīs and Qaḥṭānīs, then between tribes and townsfolk.

(*j*) A sequence of fragmentation! All of it emanating from the feeling of these 'popular' groups as a whole that they have no right to govern themselves and that there is a special chosen group alone that enjoys this right in perpetuity—the right of the sacrosanct Imāmate!

(*k*) In the past the Yemeni populace lived with the conviction that the Imāmate [21] was divinely bestowed upon a particular chosen stock, and only a small number of exceptional individuals was stirred to contest this frightful sacro-sanctity—whom the swords of the Imāms despatched, ridding themselves of them as 'criminals, heretics[107] and enemies of God'.

(*l*) This apart, there was the long bitter struggle between the Imāms themselves in the Upper Yemen, one against another, then between them and the kings and rulers of the other districts.

(*m*) Where the populace was concerned, during most phases of history it was (merely) an onlooker, sizing up the muscles of the contenders for government and domination over it, as if it were heaps of debris and rubble of antique statues quarrelled over by robber hands.

(*n*) Except, today, now that the populace has developed, stood up for itself, revolted, and been stirred up by the bright revolutionary (war)-cry of Arab nationalism (*'Urūbah*), its morrow cannot possibly be like its yesterday, nor its future like its past, and from now onwards its role will not be that of onlooker.

(*o*) It inevitably must define its attitude regarding each problem that concerns it and demand each one of its rights.

(*p*) It would be absurd for it to continue in the belief that, from all eternity, the choice of Heaven has fallen upon a number of families which, age upon age, take their turn of the divine right to rule.

(*q*) The Shāfi'ī majority[108] of the populace will not continue to accept that it be governed by a sectarian military rule expressing neither its will nor its doctrine.

[22]

(*r*) Nor will the Zaydiyyah continue subject and submissive to a 'racist'[109] government that looks down (on them), aspiring to live forever pampered by Heaven and Earth.

(*s*) Nay indeed—the populace will not assent to its morrow being like its yesterday. It must inevitably assume its full role in the contest for this is the way of life—whosoever urges it to the contrary will be bereft of sense and success.[110]

(*t*) The contest will revolve around this major leading issue—that of divine right to govern the populace.

(*u*) Who is to possess this right? Who is better entitled to it?

(*v*) Is there to be a class of mankind chosen by Heaven to rule?

(*w*) Is it to be permitted that there remain in the Yemen a sectarian[111] faction ruling another faction till eternity?

(*x*) This is the major issue of the future—around it will revolve future battles and events, and from it will develop many other issues. The Arab and international powers will exploit these whether we will or no, and the Yemen will be exposed to perils without end.

(*y*) If Yemenis wish to avert all these frightening possibilities from their country, to preserve its independence, sovereignty and unity and keep its name on the map, let them efface this superstition calling itself a sacrosanct right to rule possessed by a specific section of people and let them extend equal opportunities for governing to all sections of the populace.

(*z*) That is the straight clear truth. I do not speak of it from partisanship for one section of Yemenis as apart from another. I speak of it only from desire for the unity, freedom and independence of the populace as a whole.

[23]

10. *A menace also to the Hāshimites*

It may be said, or it may occur to mind at the first glance, that abolition of the sectarian Imāmate would be to the disadvantage and contrary to the interests of the Hāshimites alone.

(*a*) But this is a fallacious theory, for no menace, present or future, threatens the Hāshimites as does the menace of the Imāmate. Each Imām arises in one single Hāshimite family, and to him it seems that his opponents and rivals are the prominent men in the Hāshimite families only. So, from the outset, he tries to rid himself of them before any others. This on one hand—while on another, the entire populace feels that all the Hāshimite families are an arrogant class distinct from the populace and detached from it as if they were not of the populace in any way—on the contrary indeed, as if they were alien to it and intruding on it. Now, if distinctiveness was, in the ages of ignorance, a privilege for specially distinguished stocks, it will, in the future, constitute a great menace to these stocks and rouse the aversion of the populace to them, partisanship in it against them, and (lead) it to stigmatise them as reactionaries.[112]

(*b*) Consequently, as generations go by, they will become isolated from the populace, as if they were a foreign community within it, not an (integral) part of it. After that no power will be found on the face of the earth capable of subjugating the populace to an insignificant minority for ever.

[24]

(*c*) This is the result, inevitably to be expected, of the complications of the menace of the Imāmate and from preserving the Hāshimite families in (their) privilege over the populace.

(*d*) Yet, were the noble Hāshimite families to become aware of these realities, attend to warding off this menace, and their liberals to head the opposition to the Imāmic concept, the cry for a republic and the extension of equal opportunities to all of the sons of the populace to share in the right to govern, they would thereby save the unity of the homeland and spare the country many woes.

(*e*) In Egypt and all the lands of Arabism (*'Urūbah*) and Islam are Hāshimite families preserving their noble lineage and tracing back their descent (to the Prophet) but they do not make means to rule and privilege out of this descent. Through this they have been able to merge with the populace and become a basic constituent (composed) of its noblest constituents, sire-ing among their sons heroes who rise to the highest ranks of society through their personal abilities, not by their descent and noble lineage. On this account these outstanding persons do not come across those who attack their position or attempt to remove them from it.

(*f*) How many great heroes we have known who shot up to the ranks of political or scholarly leadership, enjoying an overwhelming popularity,[113] and when we enquire into their descent we find them to be of pure Prophetic stock, but this descent of theirs was not a reason for their supremacy in society, for they attained dominance through their abilities and valour alone.

(*g*) On the contrary, it is certain that had they clung to the attribute of descent, becoming [25] thereby distinct from populaces, it would have been difficult indeed for them to attain what they did.

(*h*) No-one is unaware that in the Yemen, centuries ago, there were remnants of the Persians[114] and families specially distinct left behind from the era of the Persian occupation. They continued for a number of centuries to maintain their distinctness from Yemeni society. Thus they provoked the resentment[115] of the populace, driving it to league together against them and become estranged from them. Yet foolhardy sons of these families kept boasting at the Arabs and trying to emulate them in their own native Yemeni country until eventually they isolated themselves from the populace and (came to) realise a feeling of loneliness, isolation and constriction.

(*i*) Ultimately they were obliged to abandon their Shah-like Sasanian traditions, to merge with the populace and become part of it.

(*j*) Nowadays we do not find any Yemeni referring to these families or possessing any knowledge[116] of them. Nor do we consider it improbable, when the principle that government is the right of the people is realised, that the day will come when some gifted man (drawn) from these elements merged in the populace may come to head the people's government[117] through application of the principle of equality of opportunity among all citizens.

(*k*) So if this was the case with the remnants of the occupying Persian Abnā' how then will the case be with the Arab Hāshimite families in the era of Arab nationalism (*qawmiyyah*) which is carrying along the Arabs towards complete unity, and, be it sooner or later, to a unitary Arab state?

[26]

11. *No partisanship*[118]

(a) It would be a major error—the very reverse of logic—that those who take up the cry for popular government should be suspected of stirring up sectionalist[119] partisanship.

(*b*) The reality, on the contrary, is that they are taking up the cry for the unity of the populace, a unity safe and sound, based upon guarantees of its permanence in the future without squalls.

(*c*) Those who place their faith in sectionalism are the very persons who defend the barriers and discriminations that divide them from the rest of the groups and classes of the populace, insisting that they be distinct from the populace and set apart from it by political and social rights—as if not disposed to accept that they be numbered among its sons or be on the same human plane as its humanity.[120]

(*d*) This arrogant attitude is the sectionalist attitude and the thing most dangerous to the Hāshimites and their future, whether they live in the Yemen or in any other Arab country.

(*e*) No Arab populace accepts the deification of one family of it, or its being kept distinct from it by any (special) right whatsoever.

(*f*) The Egyptian Revolution is not a sectionalist revolution[121] because the populace of Egypt is, without exception, the furthest removed of populaces from the sectionalism (deriving from difference in) birth. [27] From the outset it rejected the existence in Egypt of a class distinguished from the populace (by privilege) like the Pashas and Feudalists.[122]

(*g*) When it (the Revolution) put its programme into practice it did not eliminate the Pashas in their capacity as Egyptians, but only the barriers and distinctions (of privilege that used to raise them over the level of the populace.

(*h*) It (the Revolution) did, in my view a good turn to the future of these Pashas and warded off the resentments of the populace from them.

(*i*) Nevertheless they did have the possibility of doing themselves a (still) better turn than this had they forestalled the Revolution by demolishing with their own hands, those barriers that used to keep them apart from the populace.

* * * * *

Al-Badr Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Amīr

Zubayrī makes great play with the person of the celebrated twelfth/eighteenth century scholar al-Badr Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl b. Ṣalāḥ al-Amīr al-Khawlānī, then al-Ṣan'ānī, defined by al-Shawkānī an *imām mujaddid,* but he brazenly twists history into anti-Imāmic polemic. This gave certain Republican writers the inspiration to publish a contentious biography, *Ibn al-Amīr and his era: a picture of the struggle of the Yemeni populace.*[123] The main author, it is alleged, was Qāsim Ghālib Aḥmad, now deceased, a Shāfi'ī, a man of poor reputation and a pronounced chip on the shoulder. He is the author of a book on suffering and torture in Ḥajjah prison[124] much of which, other former prisoners there tell me, is fabrication. Al-Amīr's *Dīwān*[125] has been printed, so, with this and other Zaydī biographies, one can easily assess the extent which Qāsim Ghālib and his collaborators have grafted their notions onto the views of al-Amīr—Qāsim Ghālib's biography has a validity only in revealing only the political propaganda of the opponents of the Ḥamīd al-Dīn Imāms.

Al-Amīr was born in Kuḥlān in 1099/1687-8 and died in Ṣan'ā' on the 3 Sha'bān 1182/11 December, 1768. In 1107/1695-6 or a few years later, he moved to Ṣan'ā' with his father, and, as his biographer[126] states, 'made open display of independent judgement, took his stand on proof, shunning *taqlīd*[127] and the spuriousness of those jurisprudent opinions for which no proof exists [*aẓhar al-ijtihād wa-'l-wuqūf ma'a 'l-adillah, wa-nafara min al-taqlīd wa-zayf mā lā dalīl 'alay-hi min al-ārā' al-fiqhiyyah*]'. Al-Amīr taught in Ṣan'ā' and is recognised as an outstanding *mujtahid.*[128] Throughout his life he played an important political role, particularly in his earlier phase as a conciliator between various notables of the Imāmic House. In 1151/1738-9 the Imām al-Manṣūr put him in charge of the (Friday) address (*khuṭbah*) in the Ṣan'ā' Jāmi' Mosque, but in 1154/1741-2 slanderers told the Imām, after an address of his in the Mosque, that he wished to contradict/violate the doctrine of the Family (*mukhālafat madhhab al-Āl*),[129] i.e. the Zaydī 'Alawīs. He managed however to satisfy al-Manṣūr—false representations about him had previously been made to the Imām al-Mutawakkil.

The incident cited by Zubayrī (p. 106) is most fully reported in the *Dīwān.*[130] On the first Friday of Jumādā I, 1166/10 March, 1753 he delivered an address in the Jāmi' Mosque of Ṣan'ā'. 'We have a rule (*qā'idah*) that if the first exhortatory address is prolonged we abbreviate the second address and bless the five Ahl al-Kisā'[131] in detail, then we bless the Family (*Āl*) in general (*jumlatan*)—the fashion has gone on for many years', says Muḥ. b. Muḥ. Zabārah. This was what al-Amīr did. That the preacher (*khaṭīb*) should have omitted the name of their ancestor al-Qāsim and the blessing upon him annoyed the ignorant persons of the House of the Imām al-Qāsim So they collected and went to the notables and chiefs of the Imām's house, such as the Lord, the very learned Muḥammad b. Isḥāq,[132] who told them that what al-Amīr had omitted was not obligatory and did not invalidate the address or the prayer.

They eventually persuaded a senior member of the Imām's house, Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Ḥusayn b. al-Mahdī, who laid the matter before the Khalīfah (the Imām). The Imām told him it was a simple matter which he knew the preacher would not repeat, but this did not satisfy him and he threatened to kill al-Amīr if he were not put in prison. The common folk (*'āmmah*) became excited and there was much outcry. The Imām brought both parties together in the Qaṣr of Ṣan'ā' and the matter was ventilated, but he decided that al-Amīr should stay in prison (Dār al-Adab) and he seems to have been kept under comfortable house arrest in the Qaṣr with the naqīb Almās, one of the Imām's Emirs, for a month or two. Muḥammad b. 'Alī on the other hand the Imām al-Mahdī threw into prison, confiscating his 14 horses and his *iqṭā'* land in Ḍawrān and Ḥubaysh, and he died there. About thirty other persons of the Imāmic Family were imprisoned at the same time. He also dealt with Yūsuf al-'Ajamī al-Imāmī, an Ithnā'asharī Shī'ī an open 'Rāfiḍī'[133] who had come to Ṣan'ā' in the days of the Imām al-Manṣūr and was a teacher at his court (*mudarris bi-ḥaḍrati-hi*), the chief instigator of the trouble. Al-Mahdī expelled him from the Yemen and quiet was restored. Al-Mahdī, though sympathetic to al-Amīr's views and *ijtihād* in general, appointed a new preacher, but al-Amīr continued his teaching, writing, and giving *Fātwās* (*iftā'*).

The real reason for the attack on al-Amīr, his biographers maintain, was because of his reading (with students of course) the Sunnī books of Tradition (*kutub al-ḥadīth al-ummahāt*), and his preoccupation with al-Sunnat al-Nabawiyyah—i.e., Sunnism, teaching it, disseminating it from the pulpit and the like. There was, says al-Shawkānī, no harm in this, since the Zaydī Imāms used these books in their compilations (*muṣannafāt*) from the time the said books arrived in the Yemen. The ordinary folk accused al-Amīr of *naṣb*, hostility to the 'Alawīs, and people also suspected the Khalīfah, al-Mahdī, of being a Sunnī and sympathising with Sunnīs.[134]

It seems to have been after this incident that the Dhū Muḥammad and Dhū Ḥusayn of Jabal Baraṭ, who were at that time a strong confederation (*jamrah*) which none could withstand, collected tribal armies and threatened to come out against al-Mahdī in support of the (Zaydī) Doctrine/School/Rite (*nuṣrat al-Madhhab*) since the Imām was supporting al-Amīr on his course of destruction of it. As Zubayrī says, they had to be bought off by a bribe of an increase in their stipends of 20,000 *riyāls* per annum.

Al-Amīr, to judge from the histories, does not seem to have been animated by any motive of struggling against the Imāms as Zubayrī avers, nor do the Imāms seem to have been opposed to him. The historians do not suggest that he made a deliberate gesture of dropping their names from the prayer—which in Islam would be tantamount to rebellion. Nor yet can the accusation of his enemies that he was anti-Hāshimī/'Alawī be justified. The *Dīwān* speaks of them in the highest terms as *'uṣbah 'Alawiyyah hum zubdat al-kuramā' wa-'l-ashrāf.*[135] Imām al-Mahdī entrusted him with the

Awqāf of Ṣan‘ā’ in 1161/1748 an office which he discharged honestly for a few years then resigned from it, but left in his will 100 *qirsh* (*riyāls*) to charity and 100 to the poor of the Banū Hāshim, out of scruples about the *waqf*.[136]

In point of fact al-Amīr clearly sought that the Imāms should enforce a just Islamic administration which it was probably impracticable for them to implement without losing the effective political support of their followers. When al-Manṣūr succeeded to the Imāmate he counselled him in verse[137] to entrust just persons with charge of the peasantry (*al-ra‘āyā*) and he points to the tyranny (*jawr*) of the assessor, tax-gatherer and collector of the tithe (*muthammir, qabbāḍ, ‘ashshār*). He inveighs against customs and tolls (*mukūs*), as do all Islamic *‘ulamā’*, not only those of the Zaydī school, though it is an open question whether any Islamic ruler has ever dispensed with this source of revenue. He makes a strong attack[138] on giving *zakāt* money to the ‘turbaned’ (*al-mu‘ammamūna*) and the House of the Imām—which indeed is prohibited the ‘Alawīs by the *sharī‘ah*—perhaps the Quḍāh are to be included here with the ‘Alawīs? He urged al-Mahdī ‘Abbās to send teachers to the remoter villages, towns and country-side (*bawādī*) to remove idolatrous beliefs in trees, stones and domes (*qubab*)—i.e., saint-cults.[139] Al-Mahdī assented to this and his governors took over a great wealth of property devoted to these ‘idols’. In short al-Amīr’s standpoint was that of Zaydī orthodoxy, certainly not a polemic against the Imāmate as an institution. If one can honestly construe the opposition to al-Amīr over his utilisation of Sunnī collections of Ḥadīth Tradition as an attack on the exercise of independent judgement (*ijtihād*), Imām Aḥmad cannot be accused of ignoring the Sunnī canonical works, for, in making his decisions by *ijtihād*, he had no hesitation in selecting from them when he thought it appropriate to do so.

Al-Badr al-Amīr is buried in the cemetery (*ḥawṭah*) south-west of the minaret of al-Madrasah Mosque.

Al-Shāfi‘ī and the Yemen

The Shāfi‘ī school of Islam is far from being opposed in principle to the ‘Alawīs, Sayyids or Ashrāf, and Ḥaḍramī Sayyids are numbered among the leading divines in the branches of this Sunnī rite in south Arabia and Indonesia. Al-Shāfi‘ī himself went to the Yemen during the reign of the ‘Abbāsid Caliph al-Rashīd and, according to the author of *Ghāyat al-amānī*,[140] ‘he entered Ṣan‘ā’ and received *‘ilm* [learning] from the Qāḍī of Ṣan‘ā’ who was at the day Hishām b. Yūsuf [the Abnā’ī][141] and from Muṭarrif b.

Mādhān, these two being the most important of the companions of Ibn Jurayj who received *'ilm* from 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ. Al-Dhahabī said in *Tārīkh al-Islām* that the governor of Ṣan'ā' wrote to al-Rashīd, "If you wish for obedience [*ṭā'ah*] to last in the Yemen you will send for al-Shāfi'ī, for he is one of the propagandists of the Ṭālibīs [i.e. 'Alawīs]." So al-Rashīd sent for him and he was carried to Baghdad. Al-Rashīd imprisoned him, then set him free, and he went to Egypt where he remained until he died, God rest him.'

Politically al-Shāfi'ī was a Shī'ī—this he avows himself in the verse:

In kāna rafḍ-an ḥubbu Āli Muḥammad-in
Fal-yashhadi 'l-Thaqalāni annī Rāfiḍī
If *rafḍ*-ism be love of the Family of Muḥammad
Let Men and Jinn testify that I am a Rāfiḍī.[142]

Rāfiḍī in this context would be the opposite of Nāṣibī, and mean pro-Sayyid/'Alawī, but it is a sobriquet, usually abusive, for the Shī'ah.

Notes

1. His *al-Tārīkh al-sirrī li-'l-thawrat al-Yamaniyyah*, Beirut, 1977, 17, written in rather uneducated Arabic, is a first-hand account of the attitudes and plottings of the young officer element.

2. Ibid, 26.

3 . *Aqūl 'Izrā'īl fī 'aṣr-ak waqaf*
W-intah kafayt-ah fī ḥayāt-ah wa-'l-mamāt.
In qult anā sārif fa-mā 'indī saraf!
Man dhāk dhī min ghayr sayf-ak zād māt?

Wa-man nizil Bayḥān mā 'ind-ah sharaf.
Kīf al-qawā'id ḥīn khazzantum bi-qāt?
Quddam-ak al-Bāhūt yaḥkum bi-'l-inṣāf!
Man 'ānad-ah yinza' fu'ād-ah wa-'l-riyāt! (*rajaz* metre)

'Izrā'il is the Angel of Death. Al-Bāhūt (syn. *al-mukhīf*) was Aḥmaḍ's nickname.

4. For example by the late Muḥammad Aḥmad Nu'mān, *al-Aṭrāf al-ma'niyyah fi 'l-Yaman*, Beirut, 1965.

5. For the current situation see my summary in *Middle East Annual Review*, 1978, Saffron Walden, 419-23. No reliance is to be placed upon 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Bayḍānī, *Iqtiṣād al-Yaman*, Cairo, 1961; and Mohamed Said El Attar, *Le sous-développement économique et social du Yemen*, Alger, 1964, is not very trustworthy either.

6. An unusually informative report of an interview with him appears in the *Observer* of 12 April 1964. The Egyptians did not encourage the *Observer*'s correspondent to see Zubayrī, and little wonder, for he declared that the Royal Family could return as private citizens and take their chance in future elections. The Yemen should not be interfered with by any foreign power. By this he meant Egypt, and he wanted the UAR troops to leave.

7. The bibliography of Zubayrī is now considerable. 'A group of Yemeni writers' has issued a series of useful studies, introduced by 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Maqāliḥ, *Al-Zubayrī, shā'ir-un wa-munāḍil-un*, Beirut, 1977. It is interesting to note that (p.32) Zubayrī attributed the weakness of both the 1948 and 1962 movements to their complete neglect of the *fallāḥ* and the tribesman cultivator (*qabīlī fallāḥ*). Cf. Aḥmad al-Shāmī, *Min al-adab al-Yamanī*, Beirut, 1974, passim.

8. For the genealogy one may consult al-Mubarrad, *Nasab 'Adnān wa-Qaḥṭān*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Maymanī, Cairo, 1936; al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl I*, ed. Muḥ.al-Akwa', Cairo, 1383/1963, 103 ff., *al-farq bayna Qaḥṭān wa-'Adnān*, etc.

9. *Dāmighat al-Dawāmigh*, London, July 1966, 25.

10. From al-Nādirah, a Shāfi'ī, a relative by marriage of former President al-Iryānī, whom I first met in exile in Nairobi in 1957.

11. *Asrār al-Yaman*, dated Cairo, 20 September 1962. He also wrote a series of articles in *Rūz al-Yūsuf* on the despotism of the Imāmate (sic) about this time.

12. Op. cit., 77.

13. To be dated about 1959, p.86. In *al-Zubayrī shā'ir-un*, 146, Zakī Barakāt states that, after the 1955 attack on Imām Aḥmad, Zubayrī rejected the Imāms entirely.

14. *Ma'ārik wa-mu'āmarāt ḍidd qaḍiyyat al-Yaman*, 143 seq. No date or place of publication are given, but the book is reviewed by a certain 'Alī Muḥammad in the paper *al-Fikr*, Aden, 22 June 1957, as *awwal da'wah ṣarīḥah li-'l-Jumhuriyyah fī 'l-Yaman*.

15. Op. cit., 32.

16. *Usṭūrat al-Yaman al-sa'īdah*, Beirut, 24 March 1966/3rd Dhu 'l-Ḥijjah, 1385 H.

17. Published in Cairo, March 1965; cf. p.24, *al-Shī'ah wa-'l-nawāṣib* etc., reviewed in the Ṣan'ā' weekly *al-Thawrah*, 17 March 1966, by Sufyān al-Baraṭī, with a pointed criticism. Muḥammad Nu'mān nevertheless propounds quite interesting theories on Yemeni politics even if, on analysis, one is not altogether convinced by them.

18. Nevertheless an unknown unidentified MS. exists in the Ambrosiana (E.188, i) by a certain Miḥyā b. 'Ulayf, entitled *al-Qaṣīdat al-farīdah, iftikhār al-'Adnān 'alā Qaḥṭān*, but it may have no relevance here.

19. William R. Brown, 'The Yemeni dilemma', *Middle East Journal*, Washington, 1963, xvii, iv, 349-67.

20. *Modern Yemen*, Baltimore, 1967, 230. Cf. review in *B.S.O.A.S.*, 1970, xxxiii, 211-14.

21. A biased and untrustworthy booklet entitled *al-Shī'ah fī 'l-Yaman*, Cairo, 1970, was put out under what must be a pseudonym, 'Abdullāh al-

Muwaffaq, claiming to represent the 'ulamā' al-Sunnah—i.e. the Shāfi'īs, of Ta'izz, Ṣan'ā', al-Ḥudaydah and Ibb, interesting only as representing the extremists among the Shāfi'īs.

22. The Committee in reality seems to have been the late Muḥammad Aḥmad Nu'mān, as I am informed by Dr Muḥammad An'am Ghālib, and the latter himself, with perhaps occasionally others.

23. The title is Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Zubayrī, *al-Imāmah wa-khaṭaru-hā 'alā waḥdat al-Yaman*, Dār al-Ṣaḥāfah Press, Beirut, n.d. The likely date of publication is 1959, but it can hardly be published earlier than 1958 and *al-Khud'at al-kubrā* (The great deception) in which Zubayrī attacks the union of the Yemen with the UAR, carries an advertisement for *al-Imāmah* as does the latter for *al-Khud'ah*. The union took place in 1958, and Nu'mān *père* told me it was published *ba'd al-waḥdah*.

The Shāfi'ī Qāsim Ghālib Aḥmad (cf. p.111) printed a re-edition of *al-Imāmah* at Cairo in 1968, with strongly biased comments of his own. He has no scruples about occasionally altering Zubayrī's wording, but the sub-headings he introduces and punctuation improve on Zubayrī's rather erratic presentation. He omits section 1, but adds a not uninformative preface of his own.

The numbering of sections and paragraphs is mine, and I have re-punctuated the translation. Another edition is known, *Dār al-Hanā li-'l-Ṭibā'ah*, Beirut, 1972.

24. *Sha'b*, a politically emotive word, is so rendered throughout for emphasis, but it means 'the people'.

25. Ḥasan, son of Imām Yaḥyā, brother by a different mother to Imām Aḥmad. The Ḥamīd al-Dīn House disapproving of Aḥmad's nomination of his son al-Badr as heir-apparent, tended to support Ḥasan, regarded as highly conservative though with his father's reputation for *bukhl* (close-fistedness), as potential successor to Imām Aḥmad. Aḥmad sent Ḥasan to Washington to keep him out of the way. Ḥasan was supported by the conservative elements, especially in the Mashriq and a plot was certainly afoot at the time of Aḥmad's death to substitute him for Badr. This split in the Family led Badr to rely on the dubious loyalty of the young army officers trained by Nasser's officers—which led to the coup of 26 September 1962.

26. For the refutation of Zubayrī's unjustified strictures on the Imāmate see pp.97-9.

27. These are political jargon. *Al-taqālīd al-raj'iyyah* and *fawāriq al-ṣifāt allatī tumayyiz*. Al-Shāmī said *taqālīd* means *'ādāt* here.

28. *Maṭālib al-sha'b* by Zubayrī and Aḥmad Muḥammad Nu'mān (*père*) Maṭba'at Dār al-Janūb, in 1952, an idealistic if quite reasonable proposal for a democratic state, not attacking the Imāmate as such. Al-Shāmī thinks that *Ahdāf al-Aḥrār* was published in Aden, perhaps about 1945 or 1946. It may be noted that his collected verse, his *Dīwān*, has been published recently at Beirut (1978).

29. The 'Occupied South' at this time, in the face of frontier troubles initiated from the Yemen, had been assigned 3 battalions of British troops, stationed in sensitive border villages such as Ḍāli', Mukayrās and Bayḥān.

Ḥaḍramawt had no British troops at all, only a few RAF personnel at Riyān air-strip, to operate it. Previously the whole of this great area had been policed by Arab troops alone. Al-Maqāliḥ (*al-Zubayrī shā'irun*, op. cit, 28-9) says Zubayrī and the Liberals were not anti-Britain in Aden, considering Britain as 'the Neighbour (al-Jārah)' there.

30. This is a well known Mu'tazilite phrase. The Zaydīs of course believe in such Mu'tazilī doctrines as the intermediate position, known as *manzilah bayna manzilatayn*, between the Believer and Infidel, but the Ash'arīs (below, fn. 82) believe there is no such position and there are only Believers and Infidels.

31. Zubayrī completely misrepresents the situation. See p.90 and fn. 33. His account of segmentation in the Yemen is also far from objective.

32. He means the Yemeni Sayyids. Comment was that this is an expression of animosity (*ḥiqd*) towards them.

33. My informants insisted that *'uhūd* is to be taken in the sense of 'ages' here, but they seem mistaken in view of what follows. The British Colonial policy at this period, so far from being 'Divide and rule', concentrated on setting up a federation!

34. Zubayrī here is drawing on his imagination for as Aḥmad al-Shāmī has pointed out a tribesman, an Arḥabī for instance, is an Arḥabī before he is a Yemeni. There was little sense of unity in those times, though education may today have begun to alter attitudes to some extent.

35. This diabolical plot seems to exist only in Zubayrī's imagination!

36. *Shaṭr* in view of what follows might be better rendered as 'a part'. For al-Shāmī's refutation of this concept of the Imāmate see p.98.

37. *Ṭuqūs*, rites, says al-Shāmī, is not a Zaydī word, but a Christian term. For Zubayrī it would mean the Zaydī *adhān, 'Ḥayya 'alā khayr al-'amal'*. It is true of course that the Zaydīs did impose this on such Shāfi'ī territories as Ḥaḍramawt when they conquered it, but the Turks of the second Ottoman occupation forbade it in Ṣan'ā', and it was not imposed on the Shāfi'ī districts at the time Zubayrī was writing. Al-Shawkānī, *al-Badr al-ṭāli'*, Cairo, 1348 H., ii, 122, tells of a Zaydī Imām's persistence in using this form of *adhān* when the Ṭāhirid 'Āmir b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb had entered Ṣan'ā'.

38. *Ifti'āt* was explained as *al-da 'watal-bāṭilah*, false claim.

39. Zubayrī alludes to the coming of the first Zaydī Imām, al-Hādī, to the Yemen some 1,100 years ago—an 'Adnānī not a Qaḥṭānī! He deliberately ignores the essential need of such an office as the Imāmate among the northern tribes. Cf. my 'South Arabia' in C.A.O. van Nieuwenhuijze, *Commoners, climbers and notables*, Leiden, 1977, 226-47.

40. This alludes to the saying, *Al-waswās yajrī fī Ibn Ādam majra 'l-dam*, 'The devil of evil prompting runs in Man as blood runs (in his veins)'.

41. My informants said *ādamiyyah* means 'humanity'.

42. A standard cliché in the political jargon of the time, a Marxist echo.

43. Zubayrī refers to the Zaydī soldiers and officials who collected taxes from the peasants of the Shāfi'ī districts and to the customs officials known for their illegal exactions. From criticisms in the current Ṣan'ā' press it seems that corrupt practice among customs officials persists! A

A traditional attitude is expressed by al-Mujallī, MS. in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana on the law of the Zaydī Imāms, uncatalogued (the author is unknown to my Zaydī informants and the vocalisation of his name is uncertain) 14a, quoting Qur'ān, xlviii, 4 and 7, *Li-'llāhi junūdu 'l-samā' wa-'l-arḍi,* God's are the troops of the Heavens and Earth, averring that al-Zaydiyyah are the 'troops of the Earth'.

44. The Prophet, himself a rain-maker, withheld rain if the *zakāt*-tax was not paid (*South Arabian hunt*, London, 1976, 36; Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, ed. Ḥamīdullāh, Cairo, 1957, i, 82). Imām Aḥmad was particularly famed for bringing rain when he came to a place, but the happy virtue of bringing rain might be attributed to anybody, as they say, '*Filān rijl-ah khaḍrā'*, So and so's foot is moist (*khaḍrā' = mubtallah*)'. If it rains when one arrives somewhere people say half-jokingly, 'Your blessing (*barakah*)'. Cf. M. J. Kister, Extracts from Arabic manuscripts concerning the Jāhiliyyah and early Islamic period, Jerusalem, 1969, 8, *K. al-Manāqib al-Mazīdiyyah* ... of Abu 'l-Baqā' Hibatullāh, 'When they fought the Muslims the Prophet invoked against them (*da'ā 'alay-him*), saying, "O God, tread severely on Muḍar and send down upon them (rainless) years like the years of Joseph". And he prayed (*qanata*) against them forty days, invoking (God) against them at each prayer. In consequence drought over them followed seven successive years until they perished ... Then their delegations came to him saying, "O Muḥammad, your people have perished, so invoke God in their favour"'. Of the first Zaydī Imām of the Yemen the *Sīrat al-Hādī* of al-'Abbāsī, Damascus, 1972, 65, tells us that Banū 'Aqīl said, 'Abu 'l-Ḥusayn has never passed through our country but it rains', while others say, 'Rain has come to us through the *barakah* of Abu 'l-Ḥasan'.

45. The position is defined by al-Mujallī, MS. cit., 16 a. In the time of an Imām disposal/administration (*taṣarruf*) in the tithes, *zakāt*, fifth, treasuries, and *fiṭr* alms (*al-ash'ār wa-'l-zakāt wa-'l-akhmās wa-buyūt al-māl wa-ṣadaqat al-fiṭr*) is only by his permission or order. In discussing *ṣadaqah* (ibid, 17 a) he says, '*Mā kāna ilā Rasūl Allāh ... fa-huwa ila 'l-Imām ba 'da-hu bi-la 'khtilāf*, Whatever is to the Apostle of God pertains to the Imām after him, without dispute'. The Imām al-Manṣūr, says al-Mujallī, stated that if the tithes are paid to some other, without the Imām's permission, he is a *kāfir* (infidel) and his territory/house (*dār*) in the event of resort to arms ((?) *ma'a 'l-shawkah*) becomes Dār Ḥarb. Killing them, taking captive their offspring and plundering their properties is licit, as the Companions did after the Prophet.

The *Sīrat al-Hādī*, op. cit., 174, alludes to the Hāshimīs of the earliest Zaydīs in the Yemen as inheriting the Prophet's position (*maqām*).

46. Sayyid Aḥmad al-Shāmī tells me that only the Ṣalāt al-Jum'ah of the Friday comes into this category. He agrees this is not an early Zaydī tenet but in late books it is laid down that, with the presence of a just ruler (*al-ḥākim al-'ādil = al-imām al-'ādil*), one must attend the Friday prayer.

The Head of the Court of Appeal (*Ra'īs al-isti'nāf*) in Ṣan'ā', Zayd al-Daylamī (ob. 1365/1946), for a number of years during the latter days of Imām Yaḥyā, never attended a Jum'ah prayer, on the grounds that '*Lā* *tu’qadu shar‘ī ‘iyyat al-Jum‘ah illā ma‘a wujūd al-Imām al-‘ādil’* (The legality of the Jum‘ah-prayer is only concluded with the presence of a just Imām). He meant of course that he did not consider Yaḥyā to be such. Cf. Mohamed Said El Attar, *Le sous-développement*, op. cit., 281; propagandist and utterly inaccurate as it is, it reflects the political attitudes of Zubayrī and the opposition to the Imāms.

47. *Al-rakhā’*. The verb *rakhā* in Dathīnah means ‘to rain’, and this sense may be included here.

48 He means, sarcastically, that through the Imām they obtain the delights they could not get in life.

49. He is ‘delivered’ (*‘atīq*) because he has escaped the famine. The historians of earlier periods make occasional reference to Imāms distributing grain during the periodic famines, but there may be some truth in Zubayrī’s implication that Government grain was withheld during the famine of World War II. Yet the Aden paper, *Fatāt al-Jazīrah*, vi, no.291, of 7 Oct. 1945, in an interview with someone from al-Bayḍā’ asks, ‘Have you quantities of grain[*ṭa‘ām*] in the underground silos and stores [*al-madāfin wa-’l-makhāzin*]?’ To this the answer was, ‘A little is to be found with the *ra‘iyyah*, but most is with the Treasury [Bayt al-Māl] estimated to be from 6,000 to 8,000 *qadaḥs*, the price of the *qadaḥ* at the present time being 7 *riyāls*, and the Government lends it to the *ra‘iyyah*.’ These loans are made till a time of *khayr*, probably harvest being meant, or prosperity. This price is very high. Letters from Ṣan‘ā’ in November 1943 stated that prices are increasing daily owing to the lack of imports and the poor rainfall. The tribes are starving and typhus and smallpox are very prevalent. At this period also there was an acute famine in Ḥaḍramawt: it was relieved by British aid.

50. *Ẓill*, shade, has also the senses of protection, patronage, sovereignty.

51. *Qiddīs* is applied to Christian saints, and for this reason is doubtless purposely used by Zubayrī. Zaydīs, as contrasted with Yemeni Shāfi‘īs, are opposed to saint cults. Qāsim Ghālib’s comment to his edition (p.19) attacks Imām Aḥmad for destroying the tombs of Ibn ‘Ujayl and Ibn ‘Alwān—for which act Aḥmad was satirised by the poet al-Ḥaḍrānī.

52. Lit., *adhnāb*, tails, a favourite expression of Nasserite propaganda for the supporters of a political opponent.

53. Ar., *ashyā‘*. Zubayrī’s views on historiography are not to be treated seriously!

54. Muḥ. ‘Alī al-Shahārī, *Ṭarīq al-thawrat al-Yamaniyyah*, Cairo, 1966, 54, avers that the régime (*niẓām*) of the imāmate ‘not only imposes on Shāfi‘īs, Ismā‘īlīs and others that they be governed, but considers them deniers of interpretation (*kuffār al-ta’wīl*) and makes spoilation of their property lawful.’ *Ta’wīl* in relation to *tafsīr* means exposition of the subject matter of the Qur’ān, not of the philology, grammar etc. Al-Shāmī and Nu‘mān said the expression goes back to the Mu‘tazilite past—*Hal Allāh khalaqa ’l-ma‘siyah*, Did God create sin? It is *ikhtilāf uṣūlī fī ’l-aqīdah*, a basic difference of tenet. Other epithets here figure in Zaydī writing on political theory. Cf. Juḥ. b. Ismā‘īl al-Amīr, *Tawḍīḥ al-afkār*, ed. Muḥ. Muḥyī ‘l-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, Cairo, 1366 H., ii, 213, *aqwāl Ahl*

al-Bayt fī qabūl riwāyāt kuffār al-ta' wīl.

55. *'Urūbah*, Arabism, Arab nationalism, which a particularly well-worn political catchword at this period.

56. It was this very sort of authority or rule (*ḥukm*) of the theocratic type that enabled the Imāms to exert any control over the tribes. Cf. my article in *Commoners, climbers*, op. cit., 244.

57. This is reminiscent of Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah*, which, prior to 1962, was much read and discussed in learned Yemeni circles. Cf. F. Rosenthal's translation, New York, 1958, i, 313, 'Royal authority and large dynastic power are attained only through a group and group feeling (*al-mulk wa-'l-dawlat al-'āmmah innamā yuḥṣal bi-'l-qabīl wa-'l-'aṣabiyyah*)'. For 'group' (*qabīl*) I prefer to substitute 'tribe'.

58. Both al-Shāmī and Nu'mān considered *iṣlāḥ* (reform) makes no sense here and suggested that *maṣāliḥ*, advantages, was intended.

59. This is a proverbial saying which Zubayrī accuses the Imām of spreading abroad in self-vindication.

60. Arabic *nafsiyyah*, thought, spirit, notion, i.e., the people are to have no reward but have to endure tribulation/distress (*balā'*).

61. On 8, xii, 1961, Muḥammad Aḥmad Nu'mān, published *al-Ta'mīm fī 'l-Yaman*, probably in Cairo as it was issued by the Committee, Lajnat al-thaqāfah wa-'l-nashr, of the Yemeni Unity (al-Ittiḥād al-Yamanī) group, as a riposte to Imām Aḥmad's celebrated poem attacking Nasser and his policy of nationalisation. Nu'mān's lively verses enumerate the various taxes Yemenis had to pay, and he quotes Muḥammad Ismā'īl al-Amīr attacking what he calls *al-aḥkām al-ẓālimah li-'l-a'immat al-Hāshimiyyah*, the unjust laws of the Hāshimite Imāms. In point of fact what al-Amīr attacked seems to have been certain malpractices (for which cf. p.114) but most of these are not specially Imāmic.

62. Al-Mujallī, MS. cit., 15 b, defines the attitude of the Zaydīs on this point. *Lā yuḥāribūn illā mubṭil-an min kāfir-in aw bāgh-in wa-man ashbaha-hu mimman yastabāḥ qatlu-hu shar'-an dūna man ḥaẓarat al-sharī'ah qitāla-hu fa-li-hādhā ju'ila 'l-jihād li-'l-Zaydiyyah li'anna-hum ka-dhālika dūna sā'ir al-firaq illa 'l-qalīl.*

He says (18a) that one is breaking one's allegiance (*nākith li-'l-bay'ah*) if neglecting *jihād* and when the Imām summons those who have paid him allegiance to it (holy war—*wa-'da'a 'l-Imām ... li-man bāya'a-hu ilay-hi*). It makes no difference whether the summons is to fight infidels (*kuffār*) oppressors (*bughāh*) or other wrongdoers. Cf. Aḥ. b. Yaḥyā b. al-Murtaḍā, *al-Baḥr al-zakhkhār*, Cairo, 1947/1366—1949/1368, v, 415, *seq. Bāb qitāl al-bughāh*. 'It is the Imām's duty to fight them (the *bughāh*) in accordance with his power to do so. (*'Ala 'l-Imām jihādu-hum ḥasb al-imkān*).

63. Muḥ. al-Ḥajarī's *Masājid Ṣan'ā'*, Ṣan'ā', 1361/1942, though it says much of repairs and new additions made by Imāms to Ṣan'ā' mosques, only mentions four domes (*qubbah*) of Imāms and three built by non-Yemenis; most of the mosques were not founded by the Imāms and only a few are named after them. There are of course domed tombs of Imāms in various parts of Zaydī Yemen, and I visited those at Ẓafīr Ḥajjah in 1966, but I have not come across superstitious practices connected with them. Zaydīs are opposed to saint cults.

Qāsim Ghālib, commenting on the above, speaks of the large areas of ground around these Imāmic tombs where the rich are buried so that they may be resurrected in company with the Imāms. He accuses the Imāms also of appropriating *awqāf* to themselves.

64. Zubayrī cannot but have been aware that it would be a most uncommon Yemeni, of whatever class, who, given the opportunity, would refrain from acquiring land, nor would all Yemenis be scrupulous as to the means used to acquire it. It is not to be supposed that the Imāms' failings in this respect were greater than those of others before or after 1962.

65. In fact the Imāms have developed irrigation projects, built *samsarahs* (hostelries), stone huts for wayfarers. Imāms Yaḥyā and Aḥmad furthermore constructed quite a number of rough motor roads or masonry mountain ways on which I travelled in 1966.

66. Cf. fn. 45 on this attitude.

67. Qur'ān, xxxiii, 36.

68. By 'factional' he means Zaydī.

69. Cf. fn. 54.

70. Nello Lambardi, 'Divisioni amministrative del Yemen: con notizie economiche e demografiche', *Oriente moderno*, Roma, 1947, xxvii, 143-56, quotes a Yemeni document that claims the Zaydīs are slightly in majority. The Central Planning Organisation's *Socio-economic report 1970-1974*, published in Ṣan'ā', avoids any attempt at a breakdown of population by religion, but other sources seem to indicate a definite Shāfi'ī majority. Lambardi's source, *'Ilm al-buldān, Ṣan'ā', 1360/1941, makes the Zaydīs 55%, the Shāfi'īs 45% of the inhabitants—reckoned at somewhere over 4* millions, with 60-70 thousand Jews and 50,000 Ismā'īlīs (Ṭayyibī Fāṭimīs).

71. Zaydī governors and soldiers from the north were appointed by the Imāms to collect taxes from the agriculturally richer districts of the Shāfi'ī south. In theory the system was fair and not burdensome, but, as managed by corrupt officials and tough soldiery, it pressed hard on the peasant. This was the principal and real grievance of the southern peasant. In the north taxes were collected *bi-'l-amānah*, i.e., by local assessment, not by Imāmic officials, but at least in some southern districts the old system of direct Government taxation had not changed under the Republic as late as 1974.

The Shāfi'īs however suffered from their own leaders to judge by the information given me by a Shāfi'ī. The Government assessors, he said, used to go to the villages and the local headman (*'āqil*) would provide them with food and entertainment. They would look only at the few places he took them to see and in three days they would do what, had they inspected the district properly, would have taken them a month. They would then send back their report, but the central authorities, if a man was to pay 100 *riyāls*, might add, say, another 50 *riyāls* to it—the additional sum being dalled *ḍamm*. As far as I am aware this has no basis in law. Tax-farmers (*multazimīn*) bid for the farming (*iltizām*) of the markets at auctions (*muzāyadah*) and kept watchers (*murāqibīn*) so one could not avoid payment, and there were taxes on everything.

It is this harsh incidence of taxation to which Zubayrī is alluding, but as Muḥ. b. Muḥ. Zabārah, *Nashr al-'arf*, Cairo, 1359-76, i, 560, says, after the Turks were driven out of the Yemen after the first Ottoman occupation, the Imāms said that the lands they had held were lawful (*ḥalāl*—at their disposal) because of the unbelief (*kufr*) of the Turks. When Imām Yaḥyā re-took the Yemen after 1918, he considered the Ismā'īlī (Fāṭimī-Ṭayyibī) areas lawful (*abāḥa-hā*) and turned their lands in the Manākhah district and Ṭaybah into *waqf*.

72. See fn. 50.

73. *Ijtihād* is defined as 'exerting oneself to form an opinion' in a case, or to form a rule of law by applying analogy (*qiyās*) to the Qur'ān and Sunnah. It is opposed to *taqlīd*, 'the adoption of the utterances or actions of another as authoritative in their correctness without investigating his reasons'. (Cf. my 'The Zaidis' in Arberry-Beckingham, *Religion in the Middle East*, Cambridge, 1969, ii, 292). Muḥ. b. 'Alī al-Shawkānī, *al-Qawl al-mufīd fī adillat al-ijtihād wa-'l-taqlīd*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Abd al-Khāliq, Kuwait, 1396/1976, has a chapter on the prohibition of *taqlīd* and against the tenet of *sadd bāb al-ijtihād*, closing of the door of independent judgement which he describes as a foul heresy (*bid'ah shanī'ah*)!

74. An extensive if relatively little known Zaydī literature exists. Imām Aḥmad had a few major writings published in Egypt but now many more are being printed.

75. The fourteen qualifications required of the Imām are set forth in R. Strothmann, *Der Staatsrecht der Zaiditen*, Strasbourg, 1912, 80.

76. He seems to mean the shape given Islam by the four Sunnī schools.

77. I.e. Mālik, Ibn Ḥanbal, Abū Ḥanīfah and al-Shāfi'ī.

78. Al-Hādī was the first Zaydī Imām of the Yemen.

79. This is one of the fourteen qualifications. Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Amīr, *Subul al-salām*, 3rd edn., Muḥ 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Khūlī, Cairo, 1369 H., iii 145, says, 'In the province of the Yemen Fāṭimī women, (i.e. of the Sayyids and Ashrāf) have been prevented from that marriage which God made lawful to them, on account of the doctrine (*qawl*) of some of those following the school of the Hādawiyyah, namely that marriage of a Fāṭimī woman to anyone but a Fāṭimī man is forbidden, without their citing any evidence (*dalīl*) to this effect. It is not a doctrine of the Imām of the school/doctrine (*madhhab*) al-Hādī, on him be peace; on the contrary, he married his daughters to the Ṭabarīs and this doctrine only arose after him in the days of the Imām Aḥmad b. Sulaymān (al-Mutawakkil, 532-66/1138/71) and its (? the Hādawiyyah) leading house followed them and said, in language which speaks for itself, "Their ladies (*sharā'if*) for the Fāṭimīs are forbidden except to those the same as themselves". All this is without knowledge (*'ilm*), guidance or Book.' He asks how many Believing women (*Mu'mināt*) have been deprived of marriage because of the pride and arrogance of their guardians? Marriage within a woman's social group is of course not a practice confined to the Fāṭimī Sayyids.

80. In *Musnad al-Imām Zayd*, Beirut, 1966, 358, 360, E. Griffini edit., 247, no. 873, there is reference to fighting the *ahl al-baghy* and *al-fi'at al-bāghiyah*, but no theory is enunciated.

81. Zubayrī's interpretation of history is tendentious. In the first place *ijtihād* is not specifically 'Alawī. As A. K. Kazi, 'Notes on the development

of Zaidī law', *Abr-Nahrain*, Leiden, 1962, ii, 39, says, 'In their reasoning and critical attitude to traditions the early Zaidī imāms are strikingly similar to the early Ḥanafites. Like the Ḥanafite school too, the Zaidiyyah became less and less critical of traditions and made a restrained use of 'reason'.' Broadly speaking the exercise of the law is hereditary in the Prophet's house both before and after Islam, his ancestors acting as *ḥakams* or arbiters. That they should exercise the right of independent judgement in Islam deriving their authority from Muḥammad seems a natural evolution. The Imām al-Hādī in following only three sources of law, Qur'ān, the collectively reported Traditions of the Prophet and reason, is obviously taking a Mu‘tazilī attitude.

An old proverb, *Ahl al-bayt adrā bi-mā fī 'l-bayt* (The people of the house know best what is in the house), was cited to me as expressing the hereditary nature of law reposited in the Prophet's House, but the proverb itself has no special application to it.

82. Perhaps because the famous third/ninth century theologian al-Ash‘arī left Mu‘tazilism for orthodoxy and followed the Shāfi‘ī school.

83. By 'opinion' (*madhhab*) Zubayrī means *ijtihādāt al-Imām Yaḥyā wa-'l-Imām Aḥmad, yastanbiṭū-hā min kutub al-fiqh,* the independent judgement of Imāms Yaḥyā and Aḥmad which the Imāms elicit from the law books. Imām Yaḥyā's views have been published by Qāḍī ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Shammāḥī, *Sīrat al-‘ārifīn ilā idrāk ikhtiyārāt Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, Ṣan‘ā', 1356/1937-8, printed at Maṭba‘at al-Ma‘ārif.

It is all very well for Zubayrī to make these complaints, but, from a practical viewpoint, when there is a conflict of views, it must be that of the Imām as head of state and the judiciary which prevails.

Qāsim Ghālib notes in his edition, p.26, that judgement is made in accordance with the Imām's opinion alone and it is only read in accordance with the Imām's opinion. He states that Sayyidah Arwā bt. Aḥmad al-Sulayḥī (of the Fāṭimī Tayyibī group considered heretical by Zaydīs and Shāfi‘īs) made many waqfs to students of *‘ilm* (religious knowledge) but her waqf deeds did not specify to what school they should belong. He accuses al-Ḥasan (cf para. 3b) of allotting special stipends to those who read *al-madhhab al-Hādawī*, the school (opinions) of al-Hādī only, which he paid from the waqfs not of his own ancestors but established by others.

84. The commonly used lawbook in Mutawakkilite Yemen was *Sharḥ al-Azhār*, a commentary upon which had been printed in Cairo in 1328/1910, but a commentary by Muḥ. al-Shawkānī, *al-Sayl al-Jarrār al-mutadaffiq ‘alā Ḥadā'iq, al-azhār*, was printed in Cairo in 1970. Qāḍī Ismā‘īl al-Akwa‘ informs me that this volume upset the Zaydī *‘ulamā'* because many views were contrary to theirs. *K. al-Azhār fī fiqh al-A'immat al-Athār,* the basic text of al-Mahdī Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Murtaḍā (9th/14th century) was printed in Beirut in 1972. The *Sharḥ* is described as containing the views of the four Sunnī schools, Shāfi‘ī, Mālikī, etc., but also of various Zaydī legal authorities, some of them not necessarily even well known. The Imām as *mujtahid* can select whatever view he thinks appropriate from these because 'basic Zaydism is the fundamentals/roots (*al-Zaydiyyah al-aṣliyyah al-uṣūl*)', and the branches (*furū‘*) i.e. the systematic elaboration

of canonical law, can be drawn from the doctors of Islamic law, provided the following five fundamentals (*uṣūl*) are observed: 1. *al-‘adl wa-’l-tawḥīd* 2. *al-wa‘d wa-’l-wa‘īd* 3. *al-amr bi-’l-ma‘rūf wa-’l-nahy ‘an al-munkar* 4. *al-khurūj ‘ala ’l-maẓālim* 5. *ḥaṣr al-khilāfah fī awlād al-baṭnayn*. The last of these fundamentals—the restriction of the Caliphate to the descendants of ‘Alī’s two sons by the Prophet’s daughter Fāṭimah is the stipulation most pertinent to this essay.

85. Cf. fn. 81.

86. Ar. *ashyā‘*.

87. The text should read *qad ‘ānā*, not *wa-qad*.

88. Al-Mutawakkil al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥusayn, 1128-39/1716-27, Al-Manṣūr al-Ḥusayn b. al-Qāsim, 1139-61/1727-48, Al-Mahdī ‘Abbās b. al-Ḥusayn, 1161-89/1748-75.

89. Muḥ. b. Ismā‘īl’s biography, including this incident, is related by al-Shawkānī, *al-Badr al-ṭāli‘*, Cairo, 1348 H., ii, 133-9; *Subul al-salām*, op. cit., i, 6; *Nashr al-‘arf*, op. cit., ii, 505, i, 217-9, ii, 77; Ṣiddīq b. Ḥusayn al-Qanawjī, *al-Tāj al-mukallal*, Bombay, 1963, 414 *seq*.; Brockelmann, *Gal.*, *Sup.*, ii, 556, 74, 552. The editor of his *Dīwān* quotes other, mainly MS., sources of his biography, *Nafaḥāt al-‘anbar*, *Ṭīb al-samr*, *Sulāfat al-‘aṣr*, all known to Brockelmann.

90. There is a Bayt al-‘Ajamī, a house of merchants (*tujjār*) in Ṣan‘ā’ at the present time, Persian by origin.

91. The technical term for this is *naṣb*, a hostile person being known as *nāṣibī* (pl., *nawāṣib*) = *alladhī yunāṣib ahl al-bayt al-‘idā’*. Cf. Sīrat al-Hādī, 152, 172, and the verse of al-Mutanabbī (*al-‘Urf al-ṭayyib fī sharḥ Dīwān* ... ed. Nāṣīf al-Yāzijī, Beirut, 1955, ii, 10, on a well ‘Alawī in his day, ‘When an ‘Alawī is not the example of Ṭāhir, he is naught but an argument for the anti-‘Alawīs (*li-’l-nawāṣibi*)’. This is adapted by a Zaydī poet, with the substitution of ‘like Muḥammad’ for ‘Ṭāhir’ (*Nashr al-‘arf*, ii, 165.

The Aden paper al-*Yaqẓah*, 1957, no. 153, also defines *naṣb as hostility* to the Ahl al-Bayt and adds that *nāṣibī* is an injurious sobriquet (*nabz*) ‘for anyone who opposes the despotic rulers (*al-ḥukkām al-mustabiddīn*)’. The article in question also calls Sayyid Muḥ. b. Ibrāhīm al-Wazīr (d. 840/1436 in Ṣan‘ā’) ‘one of the propagandists (*du‘āt*) for liberation from sectarianism (*madhhabiyyah*) and submission to unjust rulers’. This scholar (cf. al-Shawkānī, op. cit., ii, 89, 93) is famous for his *al-‘Awāṣim wa-’l-qawāsim* and composed an anti-Zaydī tract (*Radd ‘ala ’l-Zaydiyyah*) but I do not know how far *al-Yaqẓah*’s description of his political attitude is to be trusted.

On this epithet *nawāṣib* cf. Muḥ. Aḥ. Nu‘mān, *al-Aṭrāf al-ma‘niyyah*, 24, 37.

As early as the “*Corpus iuris*” *di Zaid ibn ‘Alī*, ed. E. Griffini, Milano, 1919, 74, no. 321, we find the injunction, *‘Lā tuṣalli* ... *‘alā man naṣab li-Āl Muḥammad ḥarb-an’*, i.e., one should not bless anyone who raises war against the Family of Muḥammad.

92. *Al-madhhab al-sā’ir*, which might mean ‘current school’.

93. The Shāfi‘īs, I am informed, clasp the chest (*yaḍummūn*), at the

beginning of the prayer and raise (*yarfa'ūn*) the hands when saying *Allāhu akbar*. This is a superficial difference from the Zaydī form of prayer—Zaydīs keep the hands by the sides. Al-Shawkānī, op. cit., 134, says that Zayd b. 'Alī himself held that this is lawful. Zaydīs do not say *āmīn* after the *Fātiḥah*, holding that no extraneous word should intervene between one passage and another of the Qur'ān.

94. What follows is a paraphrase of al-Shawkānī's account.

95. Al-Shawkānī does not say 'take sides' but simply 'they say, "this is true"', '"this is false"'.

96. This is not a true summary of what al-Shawkānī says, for his text has nothing about wishing to be liberated and hold independent views. In fact he criticises a group that has read some jurisprudence (*fiqh*) but considered anyone of their contemporaries of the rank of *mujtahid* who (took a view) counter to the *fiqh* books to be heretical (*khārij min al-dīn*)—in spite of the fact that both the great and lesser Imāms take views contrary to what has been preferred by the authors in these books.

97. This whole sentence conveys a false impression of al-Shawkānī's text. He in fact concludes by saying that, so far from defending the doctrine (*madhhab*) of the Imāms, those persons who refuse to acknowledge the independent judgements (*ijtihādāt*) of the great *'ulamā'* which are counter to the school/doctrine (*madhhab*) are taking a contrary (view) to the *madhhab* of the Imāms of the People of the House and departing from (*khārij*) from their (the Imāms') consensus (*ijmā'*) since the Imāms prohibit *taqlīd* (defined in fn. 48), i.e. acceptance of authority, to those persons who have attained the rank of *ijtihād*.

98. See p.113.

99. Ar. *maṭma'*. *Ṭam'* is always used to describe the cupidity of tribes and Bedouin.

100. Al-Shawkānī, op. cit., 136, says that these *Ashrār* (he means the tribes Dhū Muḥammad and Dhū Ḥusayn) come into Ṣan'ā' each year for their stipends (*muqarrarāt*) and go to the mosques where books of Tradition are being read with some *'ālim* and stir up troubles. This, he says, is at the instigation of the *shayāṭīn al-fuqahā'*, the scoundrelly jurisprudents! So far from being religious these 'rough Bedouin (*A'rāb*)' mostly neither pray nor fast, and do not follow any of the obligatory ordinances of Islam 'except the two creeds (*al-shahādatayn*) along with the deviation in their pronouncing of them'. (The two creeds are *Lā ilāha illa 'llāh, wa-Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh*). He points to their un-Islamic practices, such as depriving women of the right to inherit, taking one another to judgement by customary law judges (*al-taḥākum ila 'l-ṭāghūt*) and making free with life and property (*istiḥlāl al-dimā' wa-'l-amwāl*), but cf. Martha Mundy's article, pp. 161-89. A current saying in allusion to the alleged lack of religion among the tribes, quoted to me runs, *'Al-qabīlī mā yuṣallī 'alā Muḥammad illā ba'd yadkum rās-ah*, The tribesman only says "Bless Muḥammad" when he knocks his head [on the lintel]'. *'Ṣallī 'alā Muḥammad'* would be his involuntary ejaculation. The sense is that the tribesman does not give any matter his consideration until brought abruptly face to face with it.

101. Op. cit., 137. This incident throws an interesting light on conditions in Ṣan'ā', but it is not as Zubayrī relates it. Al-Shawkānī says that during the very month he was penning this biography the tribes entered Ṣan'ā' treating the Ṣan'ānīs in their usual contemptuous way and robbing in the streets. When they came to the Imām's Gate a townsman saw a cow of his with them which he attempted to take back but the Bakīl tribesman with it drew his sword on him. The ordinary Ṣan'ānīs at the Imām's Gate were stirred by this to throw stones at them and then they took their camels from them and all their other beasts including those of which they had plundered the Ṣan'ānīs as well as most of their guns and other weapons, killing four more of them. On one group of them they inflicted so much harm that they were forced to flee to the mosques and privies (*maḥallāt qaḍā' al-ḥājah*). If the Khalīfah (Imām) had not restrained the ordinary folk they would not have left any one of them (alive). This brought them into deep humiliation —'may God increase their humiliation and diminish their numbers' adds al-Shawkānī.

102. The Arabic was explained as *laysat jawhariyyah*.

103. Zubayrī's conclusion may have some validity but his historical quotations cannot be said to have proved his point.

104. Or 'enslaved'.

105. A verse by 'Abd al-Raḥmān a poet of the rival house of Sharaf al-Dīn expresses the hostility of this leading family to the Ḥamīd al-Dīn.

Fa-innā Banū 'Adnāna dhuqnā marārat-an
Bi-jawri Banī Yaḥyā sakannā 'l-maqābira
Fa-lā anta Maḥmud-un wa-lā anta Kāmil-un
Wa-lā anta bi-'l-Hādī wa-lā anta Nāṣirun.

We Banū 'Adnān (the Sayyids) have tasted bitterness.
Through the tyranny of the Banū Yaḥyā (Ḥamīd al-Dīn)
we are become dwellers of cemeteries.
You are not Maḥmūd (lit. 'praiseworthy', but the name of a young
favourite of Imām Aḥmad) nor are you Kāmil (lit. 'perfect' but the
name of Maḥmūd's brother).
Nor are you al-Hādī (lit. 'guiding', but the name of the first Zaydī
Imām) nor even Nāṣir (lit. 'victorious' but the name assumed by
Aḥmad on becoming Imām).

106. Qāsim Ghālib's commentary (p.32) specifies these as *al-iqṭā'iyyāt* and the extension of them, probably meaning 'feudal fiefs', and plundering of peaceful fellow-countrymen tribes (*al-qabā'il al-muwāṭinūn al-āminūn*)! *Iqṭā'ī*, feudal, was part of the political jargon of the Nasserite era, but in Rasūlid Yemen there were actual *iqṭā'* fiefs as part of the administrative system. The Ḥamīd al-Dīn do seem to have acquired some tribal lands, in one case known to me, by the legal method of *iḥyā' al-mawāt* or bringing waste land under cultivation. Lands held by the Imāmic House were an insignificant proportion of the total cultivated area, and I am reliably informed by a Republican official that the Imāms were scrupulous that neither they nor their officials should acquire land by illegal means.

107. Stock phrases in Zaydī writings.

108. Cf. fn. 70.

109. *'Unṣuriyyah*, race, racial, ethnic, elemental. It is said to mean here the 'Alawīs as opposed to non-'Alawīs, but it might be an allusion to the alleged 'Adnān-Qaḥṭān split.

110. Or possibly 'fortune and right guidance'. Though not Qur'ānic the phrase has a Qur'ānic echo.

111. I.e. the Zaydiyyah ruling the Shāfi'iyyah.

112. Lit., 'reaction'.

113. Ar. *sha'biyyah sāḥiqah*, popularity, deriving from *sha'b* populace.

114. The reference is to the Persian Abnā' descendants of the invaders who conquered at least parts of the Yemen before Islam. Qāḍī Ismā'īl al-Akwa' informs me that their descendants are to be found in villages in the Banī Ḥushaysh tribal territory called al-Abnā' and al-Furs; some are also in Banī Shihāb territory. Al-Hamdānī *al-Iklīl*, ed. Muḥ. al-Akwa', 1963-67, i, 380, quotes a verse satirising them as 'created for buying and selling goods, and for sesame-presses, butcheries and tanneries (*ma'āṣir, majāzir, madābigh*) which annoy their neighbours, and for weaving cloaks (*mulā'*)'. Ibid, ii, 152 seq., alludes to a governor in the time of the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Ma'mūn who forbade the Abnā' to marry Yemenis and was deposed for this act. Ibid., 405-6 *passim*, knows Hishām ... al-Abnāwī, known as Qāḍī Ṣan'ā', also Imām of the Jāmi' Mosque and one of the shaykhs of al-Shāfi'ī, a man of prominence who died in 197/812-3. They seem to have been opposed to the Banū Shihāb, but in the sources at my disposal I have come across nothing to suggest that they behaved in the way Zubayrī describes—in fact as butchers and tanners they would belong to the menial class known today as *ahl al-khums*. For their claims to al-Raḥabah plain north of Ṣan'ā' in the time of the 'Abbāsid al-Saffāḥ, purporting to be granted them by a letter from the Prophet, see 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Dayba', *Qurrat al-'uyūn*, ed. Muḥ. al-Akwa', Cairo, 1977, 120-2.

Cf. al-Rāzī al-Ṣan'ānī, *Tārīkh madīnat Ṣan'ā'*, ed. Ḥusayn al-'Amrī and 'Abd al-Jabbār Zakkār, Damascus, 1974, 465, index, al-Abnāwī.

115. Ar. *ḥafīẓah*. The classical sense—indignation at violence or injury done to something one is bound to honour, respect and defend—was doubtless in Zubayrī's mind.

116. Cf. fn. 114.

117. *Al-ḥukūmat al-sha'biyyah*, popular/populace government.

118. He means for the Sayyids versus the rest.

119. Ar. *'unṣurī*. Partisanship for any single section of the population is intended—'Alawīs, Quḍāh, Qabā'il, etc.

120. Perhaps he means 'as the rest of humanity' (?).

121. Zubayrī conveniently ignores the fact that the Egyptian revolution was engineered by the Army and that under Nasser Army officers were specially privileged.

122. The *Iqṭā'iyyūn*. Cf. fn. 106.

123. *Ibn al-Amīr wa-'aṣru-hu: ṣūrah min kifāḥ sha'b al-Yaman*, Qāsim Ghālib Aḥmad, Ḥusayn Aḥmad al-Sayāghī, Muḥ. b. 'Alī

al-Akwa‘, ‘Abdullāh Mujāhid al-Shamāḥī, Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zāyid. No date, place of publication or printing house are mentioned, but it was published not later than 1969, probably in Beirut. I am informed that both al-Sayāghī and al-Shamāḥī deny having had anything to do with this book, stating that their names were added without their knowledge or consent, and that the book was written by Qāsim Ghālib and Muḥ. al-Akwa‘ only. The fifth name was not known—it is thought he may be an Egyptian Azharī.

124. Aḥmad al-Shāmī has described conditions in jail at Ḥajjah in ‘Yemeni literature in Ḥajjah prisons’, *Arabian Studies*, 1975, 43 ff.

125. Ed. ‘Alī al-Sayyid Ṣabaḥ al-Madanī, Cairo, 1384/1964. Cf. fn. 89 for the biographies.

126. *Subul al-salām*, op. cit., 6.

127. Defined in fn. 73.

128. Among his writings is *Irshād al-nuqqād ilā taysīr al-ijtihād.*

129. *Dīwān*, 381.

130. Ibid., 332 seq., with details from the other biographies.

131. The Prophet, ‘Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn.

132. Biography in *Nashr al-‘arf*, ii, 481, (d. 1167/1753-4).

133. Al-‘Ajamī, being an Ithnā‘asharī, a group to be regarded from a Sunnī viewpoint as far more extreme than the Zaydī school, could naturally be expected to view any tendency towards Sunnism with considerable disfavour.

134. Al-Amīr himself complains in his *Dīwān*, 386, of the hostility shown him on account of his propagation of the Prophet's Sunnah, the use of Sunnī works of Tradition, the science of Tradition, as one biographer states, being not widely spread in the Yemen at that time.

135. Ibid., 250. He pronounces the conventional blessings on the Prophet and al-Āl al-kirām, the noble House (p.372 passim).

136. *Nashr al-‘arf*, ii, 518-9. Al-Shāmī informs me that ‘Imām Aḥmad, on leaving the Yemen for treatment in Rome, made a will that all he possesses in the way of property, buildings, furniture and coin should go to the Bayt Māl al-Muslimīn. A number of persons bore witness to the bequest (*waṣiyyah*), including the Qāḍī Muḥammad al-‘Amrī who told me that Imām Aḥmad said, "Even this pen with which I am writing is (to) be the property of the Bayt Māl al-Muslimīn". He (Aḥmad) said, "As for my books in Ḥajjah and Ta‘izz if my son (*al-walad*) al-Badr wishes to use them he is to have them—otherwise they are to be a waqf to the Library of al-Jāmi‘ al-Kabīr in Ṣan‘ā'". He did not make a waqf of his possessions (*amlāk*), it being as if he wished to absolve himself in respect of what he had taken in the way of disbursements (*ṣarfiyyāt*). My friend (*al-akh*) Aḥmad Bāshā told me that some of the officers and al-Bayḍānī found the bequest/will and smuggled it to Cairo after the ‘Revolution’ lest people should read it and realise the virtue and honesty (*nazāhah*) of Imām Aḥmad, God rest him. I also know that Sayf al-Islām ‘Abdullāh son of Imām Yaḥyā, before he was executed, made a will that all he possesses should go to the Bayt Māl al-Muslimīn in return for what he had taken from the Chest (Ṣundūq) of the Bayt al-Māl when he was governor

of Hodeidah'. Cf. Aḥmad al-Murtaḍā, *al-Baḥr al-zakhkhār*, Cairo, 1947-49, ii, 184, re-iterating that *ṣadaqah* is not lawful for Imāms and Hāshimīs.

137. *Dīwān*, 187.

138. Ibid., 252.

139. Ibid., 9. Al-Amīr took the Zaydī attitude of condemning the 'heresy' of Sufism (p.131), was opposed to Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb (p.134) and commended holding to the Traditions from the (pious) ancestors (*al-aḥādīth min al-salaf*). He had links with the Yemeni Sunnīs and with the Sunnī Ashrāf of the Hijaz.

140. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, Cairo, 1968, i, 144-5.

141. For this person see *Tārīkh madīnat Ṣan'ā'*, op. cit., index, 542 and fn. 114.

142. *Dīwān*, ed. Zuhdī Yakan, Beirut, 1962, 117.